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Virginie.

A TALE OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

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CHAPTER LXI.

PINARD AGAIN.

MANY pleasant evenings were now enjoyed by the family, which circle included M. Aubert and one or two others. General Buonaparte came constantly, always accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Junot. Many were the discussions he held with La Beauce on the conduct of the war in Belgium, while Riouffe, listening with attention, was deeply struck by the clearness of Buonaparte's observations and the quickness of his comprehension.

'The General,' he whispered one day to Virginie, 'is the only man I have seen who seems able to control the chaotic elements we have roused by our glorious Revolution.'

In truth Riouffe had suffered so much through the disorders of the Terror that he was intent on procuring peace at any price.

General Buonaparte's aide-de-camp, Junot, was entirely devoted to his chief. Jean himself was not more attentive or more self-sacrificing.

It was on the small remittances made to Junot by his family that the two contrived to live. But Junot, being of a bold, venturesome disposition, sought frequently to increase his supply by gambling. The new luxury had no sooner appeared than

numerous public gambling tables were started, especially in the neighbourhood of the Palais Egalité, formerly the Palais Royal.

To these the venturesome aide-de-camp repaired, and as a general rule fortune favoured him, and he was enabled considerably to increase their resources.

The Comte had no love of gambling, but the study of Parisian life much occupied him at the time, and he was assured by Junot that the tables were attended by many people who would interest him.

So, one day, Junot took the Comte to one of these gambling houses. They were shown into a large room crowded with players. Down one side there was a large table at which anyone could stake their money against the bank. The game was *trente-et-un*. Besides those actually engaged at the tables there were many who had lost all they could stake, and yet lounged about watching eagerly those more lucky than themselves. Among these last were many women. Refreshments were served out in one corner of the room, and the loud laugh of those who had too freely indulged, mixed with the regular cry of the official who announced the results of the *coups* at the gaming-tables.

The Comte de la Beauce, mixing with the crowd, was amused at watching the variety of classes meeting, with Republican license, in the room. There were many of the Jeunesse Dorée, Muscadins as they were called, dressed with all the outrageous eccentricity then in vogue. There were many, too, whom, from their dress, he took to be military men. There were some in the quieter garb of Patriots, among whom were even some members of the Convention. The women were some of them very handsome, and from their free manners these seemed to belong to the class of courtesan, though this was not certain, as the license affected by even the leaders of society was so great that it was difficult to distinguish between the lady of fashion and her frail and more venal sister. Around the gaming-table there was great movement, and many disputes arose, sometimes from misconception as to the results of the game, but more often from the differences in the value of the *assignats* and hard coin. The stakes were not often large, the smallest sums could be risked. La Beauce noticed that though coin was very scarce in commerce, here most of the money risked was silver or gold.

At the table sat a young man, who had evidently drunk more than was good for him. He had gained largely, and in his excitement was loud in his remarks. Round him was a little crowd

who were backing his luck ; before him a pile of money. Among those standing at the young man's elbow was a thin, military-looking man, whose figure, though he had his back turned to him, seemed familiar to La Beauce. This man presented a shabby aspect, but, from the depreciation of the value in *assignats*, in which they received their pay, this was not unusual in military men of the day. Edging his way in curiosity towards this group of players, the Comte found himself close behind this military man. Watching the game, at which the young man still continued to win, he saw him, under pretence of aiding the young Muscadin, separate a portion of his gain and gradually bring the pieces, unobserved, to his part of the table.

'Thou hast gained again,' cried the military man. 'See, all this is thine,' and with officious hand he again gathered up the winnings and again in passing them to the young man contrived to abstract a few coins. The excitement was very great. '*À moi !*' cried the young fellow. 'A hundred louis I stake.' The military man obligingly helped him to count the sum, already his hand covered the portion he had filched from the pile, when La Beauce firmly grasped his wrist.

'Thief!' he whispered into the military man's ear. In his surprise the man lifted his head to turn round. It was Pinard.

'Monsieur,' said La Beauce to the young man, pointing to the little pile, 'have a care to your winnings.'

'That's true,' cried the young fellow excitedly, as he swept back the coin. 'One hundred louis.'

Pinard glared at La Beauce, and then round the room. People were intently interested in the game. One hundred louis in hard cash were seldom seen. The game progressed, and the young man lost.

'Double,' he cried ; this time he gained.

But La Beauce, having still hold of Pinard's arm, drew him from the table.

'Must I denounce you?' he whispered.

Pinard, biting his moustache with rage, allowed himself to be drawn away. As he glared at La Beauce his eye glittered with hate.

'Who are you?' he whispered. 'A *mouchard*? A spy?'

'You know me, and I you, M. Pinard ; once for all, will you follow me or shall I denounce you?'

Again Pinard looked round the room. His chance would

have been small had he been convicted of pilfering in that society. Still he tried once more.

'It is not fair, M. le Comte, to accuse me. How can you prove your words?'

'M. Pinard, you have five—five franc pieces in that pocket.'

Already people were beginning to listen. One man observed: 'I know the man with one eye; he was turned out of the Salle Thenard for cheating.'

'Turn out the ruffian,' cried another.

'Monsieur,' cried the proprietor of the rooms to La Beauce, 'do you complain of this man? He is well known, and I only allowed him here because he came with M. le Vicomte here.'

'I don't know him,' said a young Muscadin, turning round from the table. 'He entered into conversation with me at the café where I dined and followed me here.'

Pinard stood pale and trembling in the midst of the crowd. 'Gentlemen,' he faltered, 'there is some mistake. I can assure you that I have lately arrived from the army.'

'Cease!' cried the first speaker. 'I have seen you in Paris for the last two months.'

'Monsieur,' cried Pinard in piteous tones to La Beauce, 'I beseech you to hear me. There is some mistake, which, if monsieur will allow me, I will explain to him in private. It is an affair between monsieur and myself,' he explained to those around.

There was such a piteous look in Pinard's face that La Beauce could not bring upon himself to denounce him.

'Come, then, and explain to me,' he said, and still holding Pinard's arm he led him from the room.

When they arrived in the street he planted himself before Pinard and said:

'Pinard, I am aware of your conduct in Paris. I know it was you who denounced my wife and father-in-law, after having blackmailed them as much as you dared. You have no reason to love me or I you. If I had done my duty I should have denounced you upstairs, where you would have had but scant mercy shown you.'

'Mercy!' cried Pinard fiercely. 'You showed mercy to me in Flanders!'

'I am not here to discuss the justice of the sentence pronounced on you by your superior officers in Flanders, nor do I

intend to do so. I have nothing to say to you but to bid you be gone.'

'M. de la Beauce, it is time you should cease this tone of superiority,' cried Pinard. 'You are not now with your regiment; you are in Paris, where all are equal.'

'All honest men!' cried the Count.

'Who accuses me?' cried Pinard, and he looked around. The street was deserted, there was no one outside the door of the gambling-house—no one but his hated enemy and himself. All the savage fury of the man rose within him. Coward he might be, but even as with most cowards, he was brave enough when the odds were in his favour. Here was La Beauce still pale from his recent illness. Looking at him, Pinard felt his match.

'Who are you? An aristocrat serving under a false name! You accuse me of stealing, yet you yourself lured away your wife from her father's home!'

'Scoundrel!' cried La Beauce, making a step towards him, 'how dare you speak of my wife?' But Pinard, as La Beauce approached, aimed a heavy blow at his head with the thick stick with which he was armed. Happily, the Comte was quick enough to avoid the blow, which fell only on his shoulder, but in his effort he lost his balance and fell against the wall.

'Ha!' cried Pinard. 'Scoundrel yourself!' and his stick whirled round preparatory to another blow. The blow was happily never delivered. A strong arm seized Pinard by the waist and hurled him to the ground, where he found himself pinned by the knee of his assailant.

'*Sapristi!*' cried Junot, for it was he, 'I was just in time. I trust you are not hurt, General.'

La Beauce was on his feet in a moment, his stick raised in a threatening manner; his blood was up, and had Pinard been still in a position to defend himself, he would have attacked him with all the fury he felt at Neerwinden, when charging with his regiment.

But Pinard overpowered was a different man from Pinard triumphant.

'Mercy!' he cried, in a whining voice.

'Is this the fellow you accused of cheating and had turned out of the room?' asked Junot pressing his knee tighter.

'I was starving!' whined Pinard, 'and had a sick wife to support.'

'What am I to do with the rascal?' asked Junot. The Comte's rage was turned to contempt.

'Let the scoundrel rise,' he said.

Junot obeyed. As Pinard rose he glanced at the two. The chances were all against him now.

'M. de la Beauce,' he said humbly. 'I ask your pardon——'

'Cease!' cried the Comte, authoritatively. 'I brought this on myself by my good nature. Now, go!' and he pointed up the street with his raised stick. 'And do not let us see you again.'

Pinard stooped to pick up his stick, but Junot placed his foot on it.

'Pardon,' he said, 'the army does not retire with all the honours of war.' He then picked up the stick, and with a strong wrench broke it across his knee. 'Now,' he said, 'the *citoyen* can resume his weapon.'

Pinard took his broken stick and threw it into the street. '*Au revoir*, monsieur,' he said, resuming his natural swagger, as he turned at a safe distance and made a bow.

Junot laughed aloud.

'*À bientôt, monsieur l'escroc*,' he shouted; then, placing his arm within that of La Beauce, he led him towards home.

'What should I have said to madame had anything happened to you, *mon Général*? I hurried out directly I heard you had had a dispute with this scoundrel. I was just in the swim of the greatest run of luck I ever experienced. *C'est égal*. I have secured a couple of hundred francs for my general and myself!' And the young fellow laughed gaily as they walked home.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE 1ST PRAIRIAL.

WHAT is called the 'Reaction' had now been well established. The Jacobins' club had been shut up. Jacobins were excluded from the governing committees. Billaud Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, and Barrère had been exiled. Fouquier Tinville and fifteen of his colleagues of the Revolutionary courts had been tried, found guilty, and executed. Anything that looked like a Jacobin was hunted through the streets by the Jeunesse Dorée.

But Jacobinism was not yet quite dead. In a room in the Rue Mauconseil, between the quarters of St. Denis and Mont-

martre, were gathered the central committee of these discontents. There was no attempt at concealment. These were all Jacobins, recognisable from their dress and from their expressions of sour fanaticism. They were the Puritans of the Revolution, the Fifth Monarchy men of Paris. In the time of Robespierre such a gathering of the opposition would have been impossible. It was said then that no two prominent men could meet together without the fact being reported. But the Thermidoreans were occupied with other things. There was no man among them of sufficient eminence to guide the vessel of the State, and the mass of mediocrity that alone remained in the Convention after the proscription of the Terror, however well intentioned, was quite incapable of striking out a new policy.

In the room in which this committee sat three or four indifferent candles cast a dim, uncertain light, making even these grim conspirators picturesque, and throwing weird shadows on ceiling and wall. There was eager debate for several hours, not without many sharp words and much recrimination. In one thing at least they were agreed, and that was that the present state of affairs was intolerable. It was an insurrection they were planning, in which they knew failure meant death. They were, therefore, terribly in earnest. Little by little the whole affair was arranged. Every detail was settled, and an elaborate form of proclamation drawn up. The watchword was to be 'Bread and the Constitution of '93'; these words were to be written on the front of every patriot's hat. Women were to be sent in the van, who were to rouse the people, filling them with regrets for the good Robespierre, who had given the people bread, but who had been done to death by the members of the Convention. These women were to force the guards of the Tuileries, who would not dare to fire on them, and then the patriots would quickly do the rest.

Having settled all this, leave to address the meeting was demanded by a man dressed as a Jacobin, with his hair plastered to his face in the orthodox fashion and with the received patriotic scowl.

'Fellow-citizens,' he cried, 'I ask to be heard. I have listened to your debate with interest, but I cannot agree with your plans. I have served in the wars and had some experience in the management of men. The people are easily excited, they have proved it on the 12th Germinal; but unless they are well blooded they will not persist. The Convention is not the best place in which to begin a revolution. The members of the

Convention will cajole them as they did before. My advice is, give them courage first. Lead them against some of those haunts of our enemies, the Jeunesse Dorée, who dare to flaunt their wealth in the face of a starving people. Let them sack some of those establishments where plenty reigns, and the sight of those luxuries will nerve the spirits of those whose stomachs crave for food and strengthen their arms for vengeance. I know many such places. Death to their owners, those foul *traiteurs* who pamper with every luxury those butterflies who dare to trample on true Republicans while the people are starving. Then, when their blood is up, lead them against the Convention !'

It was Pinard who spoke. Those who listened knew nothing of the motives that urged him to denounce. Many were struck with the truth of his argument, but the majority of these men were fanatics, who were not averse to bloodshed in a righteous cause, who would have condemned most of the members of the Convention and witnessed their execution without remorse, but who yet had a thorough respect for law and order.

'No,' shouted the President. 'What the citizen suggests is robbery and massacre, and would end in anarchy. Let us not sully a good cause—let us proceed against the Convention who have placed themselves out of the law (*hors la loi*), but let us leave the rest, if they be culpable, to the future action of that law. Let the Convention be our first object.'

A hoarse murmur proved that the President spoke the opinion of the majority. Yet as the assemblage broke up more than one man came to Pinard and assured him that they approved of his plan, and some even engaged to support him in its execution in spite of the adverse opinion of the majority.

It was the evening of the 30th Floréal (April 19), the streets of the Faubourg St. Antoine were filled with people. Everywhere it was noised about that the Convention was to be overthrown the next day; that the tyrants who had decreed the death of the good Robespierre were to be guillotined; that bread was to be had in plenty. 'Bread and the Constitution of '93' was shouted boldly. Women mustered in large bodies and already paraded the streets.

Pinard was in a great state of delight. He had organised his revenge. This time La Beauce and Jacques should not escape. So pleased was he that he felt it to be an occasion on which he was justified in granting himself every gratification. So he stopped at every wine-shop he passed, and partook of a glass of

liquor at each, drinking to the success of the great enterprise; and haranguing his auditors on the necessity of making a clean sweep.

'Away with all these aristos,' he cried. 'The people shall rule. Bread for the people! Let those who withhold it perish!'

It so happened that he had to pass the door of the house in which he lived, and even in his drunken excitement he remembered that it would be well for him to be armed. He therefore mounted to his apartment on the fifth floor, and burst noisily into the miserable room where Annette was reposing after her hard day's work.

'Annette!' he shouted in drunken glee. 'Annette! where art thou, thou lazy slut? Sleeping, of course! when all good patriots are awake and other women of Paris are preparing for revenge. Up! up! and get a light.'

Poor Annette roused herself, and with difficulty, amid the oaths and abuse of her husband, lighted the sorry candle which supplied them with all the light procurable.

Pinard proceeded to arm himself.

'Dress thyself, woman,' he cried. 'When the country demands shall my wife be found wanting?'

'What is it thou requirest me to do?' asked the trembling Annette.

'This night, I tell thee,' cried Pinard, who was full of eloquence and cognac—'this night the people rise against their tyrants. To-morrow we show the Convention what it is to starve us. To-morrow we will sack all those places where the enemies of the country feast while we want. Let Jacques le Blanc and his aristocratic son-in-law tremble! The people—the people are awake!'

'And dost thou join with the people, thou, a gentleman?' cried Annette.

Pinard laughed loudly.

'A gentleman?' he cried; 'where are the dirty aristocrats? A gentleman? There will be none left by to-morrow night! Come and see the people! Ha! ha!' he laughed, 'they are a noble sight—the people!'

The grey dawn of the April morning broke gently through the window of the room. Already the candle glowed red in its cool light. Pinard, whose drunken eloquence had produced an insatiable thirst, reached down his bottle and poured out the remains into a dirty glass.

'The aristos have left me but dregs,' he cried with inebriate

inconsequence. 'No matter—to-morrow there shall be plenty. To the people!' here he drained the glass. The fumes seemed to mount to his brain, and he sank into his chair, and partly through fatigue, but more from the effects of drink, his head fell forward and he slept.

Annette sat opposite him on the only other chair the apartment could boast. She blew out the candle, and waited in the cold of day-break, half dressed as she was, till her husband was asleep. Then, as the dawn grew clearer, she watched with an eager look. Pinard lay back in his chair in a most uncomfortable position. Was it possible he really slept? She moved her chair so that its legs grated on the floor. He did not stir. On the table before him were two pistols and a large cavalry sword. If she could only get the pistols! Softly she approached the table, she leaned over and grasped one of them. But at that moment the weight of the hand on which she leant made the table creak. Pinard started up.

'Ah!' he muttered. 'It is well done! Ha! ha!—a brave bonfire! Long live the people! Sovereign people——' then he grew incoherent, sank back into his chair, his head fell on his arm on the table, and he slept again!

Then Annette seized both pistols, and, with trembling fingers, threw back the steel pan with which all pistols were fitted in those days. With care she damped the priming and even poured water into the powder. Still Pinard slept. Carefully she replaced the weapons, and, wrapping a shawl over her bare shoulders, she drew up her feet for warmth, and so perched on her chair waited for Pinard to wake.

As the bright light of morning shone upon the man whom she had once so admired, poor Annette could see that he was greatly changed for the worse. Even in his sleep his fingers twitched convulsively, he muttered and moaned, and more than once complained that something had got hold of him and was gnawing his vitals, but each time he sank back. Annette, watching, compared this creature with the gentleman of her dreams! She had become disenchanted these last months. When she had seen the return Pinard made for Virginie's kindness, she could not reconcile it with any account she had ever heard of gentlemanly conduct. She had even dared to expostulate, and been beaten for her pains. From a dog-like feeling of fidelity she still worked for him, attributing his decadence to the evil effects of the Revolution. Pinard had for a time contrived to renew her old feeling of

admiration, for he had been careful to tell her of the great people he had seen and played with, and describe the gilded saloons which he frequented, and the simple woman had starved herself to make him look decent and respectable, that he might take the place she thought him entitled to. But now? Of his own free will he had joined the people! Of his own free will he was about to attack and kill those whom the simple Annette loved and admired! She had not known the extent of Pinard's previous ingratitude. She had heard him gloat over Virginie's impending arrest. How he got his knowledge? Now this appeared clear before her. He had failed before, and was preparing another form of vengeance. How could she warn her friends?

It was past nine when a loud noise caused Pinard to start to his feet. It was the *générale* being beat.

'Eh!' he cried. 'What is that? Arms? What are we doing? I recollect—the people! The sovereign people are awake! and I was asleep! Want of civism, Pinard!—distressing want of civism. Must be punished—How? Drums making a great noise! Have they found me asleep? No, only stupid old Annette! Must fall in, though.' Here he staggered to Annette's washing trough, and, dipping his head into the dirty, soapy water, splashed it over his face; the soap got into his eyes and made them smart terribly.

'Annette! a thousand devils! What poison hast thou here? Help, Annette! I cannot see.'

Annette seized a pitcher of clear water, and, holding his head over the trough, poured it over him. Pinard rose, breathless, but partially sobered.

'Good!' he cried; 'I feel myself again. Put on thy things, woman, and come with me.'

'What for?' asked Annette, with a rebellious look new to Pinard.

He gazed at her for one minute, then, with his shut fist, struck her.

'Thou askest what for; because I bid thee,' said Pinard, with a laugh. 'Thou wast a Jacobin once, and fond of attending executions. That was for thy amusement; now thou must come and see this for mine. No words, woman. Come.'

Annette stood undetermined for a moment. Then, with quick impulse, she huddled on her clothes.

'I am ready,' she said surlily.

Pinard had girt on his sword and placed his pistols in his belt.

'Good!' he said. 'Now march—on with you.'

As Annette descended the stairs she heard him stumbling down after her.

'The devil take the whole sex,' he grumbled. 'A moment ago she was refusing to go, and now she flies like a uhlan.'

Annette emerged from the door to find a large body of women passing, crying, 'Bread! bread!' She paused on the threshold; but Pinard, coming behind her, pushed her into the street.

'To it, woman; join thy sex. Long live the sovereign people!'

Annette paused no longer, but joined the crowd in which she seemed qualified to take her place. Gaunt and haggard, with her eye newly swollen from the recent blow, and her hair untidy and uncombed, she had a wild look in her face which procured her instant sympathy with the viragos in whose company she found herself.

'Come, mother,' they cried, 'on to the Convention. Bread! bread!'

'Yes; to the Convention!' cried Annette. 'To the Convention!'

She quickly found herself in the front rank hurrying on amid shouts and yells.

It was ten o'clock on the 1st Prairial (April 20) as the crowd of women surged on to the Tuileries. The guards seeing nothing but women hesitated and let them pass, and on rushed the screaming, gesticulating, mad creatures, till the hall of the Convention itself was filled with them. Then succeeded a confusion never before witnessed. Women sitting in the place of the legislators. Women in the Tribune itself, women everywhere, and all shouting, 'Bread! bread!'

CHAPTER LXIII.

ATTACK AND DEFENCE.

AND where was Annette? As the women broke through the chain of sentries she hung back, and, turning to her right, sped through the garden of the Tuileries and dashed up the well-known street where Virginie lived.

The café was already open. Jacques's satellites were dusting and arranging everything for the busy time, when, between eleven and mid-day, the place was usually crowded. Already one or two

men had arrived and had seated themselves, when Annette rushed into the place.

'Shut up your house!' she cried. 'Where is good M. le Blanc? Let me see him at once.'

The men in the café thought she was mad and gathered round her, and Jacques, who was in the adjoining kitchen, ran into the room to see what was the matter. As soon as she saw him she darted forward.

'Save your life and that of madame,' she cried. 'Do you not know me? I came once before. Pinard; remember Pinard. Shut up your house—quick! quick!'

Jacques grew pale and trembled; his nerve was gone.

'Do you know this woman?' asked one of the men.

'Know her? I have every reason to know her and believe her,' said Jacques in a bewildered way.

'Then shut your house, quick! quick! Hear their shouts, they are coming,' urged Annette once more.

In the distance shouts were already heard. Jacques and his assistants darted to the door and the shutters were quickly up. In his terror he would have shut in the two or three men who were in the café, but La Beauce appeared at that moment, and with a cool head cross-examined Annette, and arranged everything for the best. One of the gentlemen who had come for an early *déjeuner* was luckily known at the head-quarters of the Section, and him La Beauce begged to warn the authorities of the intended assault. He then strengthened the doors and windows to the best of his ability, placing the tables and chairs against them, and waited the result. He would have sent the women out of the house, but to that Virginie would not consent. She, however, allowed Célimène to retire with little Jacques to her old retreat on the sixth floor in Pierre's rooms, while she herself took Annette to her apartment on the *entresol* to try and comfort her. The poor creature now poured out all her woes, all the insults and bad usage she had borne in silence she now proclaimed. She sobbed forth her simple faith in Pinard and her awaking from her dream.

'May I never see him again,' she cried. 'Let me stay with you, madame. I can work. I will slave for you, only let me be with someone whom I can respect and love. When I first saw you, you recollect, it was at a trial of the "suspects." I was then mad, it was with fear. I went to the Place de la Révolution and saw their heads fall, and felt no terror, except for myself. I thought that, when the Mère Annette was seen always among

patriotic women, among the *tricoteuses*, she could not be suspected. It was you, madame, who first roused my better feelings. Do you remember telling me how you prayed for monsieur? Then my man came home, and you spoke kindly to me, and gave me delicacies for him to bring him back to health. I told him what you had done, yet it was he who denounced you. I know it now. And to-day he would kill you if he could—you who fed him and brought him back to life! Let me never see him again!’

As she was speaking the noise in the street below became greater.

‘Bread! bread! and the Constitution of 1793,’ shouted many voices of people rushing on to the Convention. Then, gradually the crowd seemed to pause. Looking through the windows, darkened by the closed shutters, Virginie could see a man haranguing them. It was Pinard. He pointed to the house, and the two women, eagerly listening, heard him say:

‘There lives one of them. He feeds these insolent aristocrats, giving them all the delicacies of the season, while you, my friends, have to starve on a miserable pittance which barely suffices to keep life in you. For once you shall have a hearty meal. Down with his door! There you will find plenty. Death to the traitor if he resist! Follow me!’

‘It is he,’ whispered the affrighted Annette.

They heard the hoarse response of the crowd, they saw it surging its way led by Pinard himself. At that moment Jacques le Blanc came into the room, with him was La Beauce.

‘It is in vain you try to dissuade me,’ cried Jacques in an excited voice. ‘I will try and stop them. I am a simple *bourgeois* and know how to speak to my equals. Let me alone then.’

‘It is madness,’ cried the Comte. ‘The doors will hold out till aid arrives, and even at the worst, Jean and I being well armed can hold the crowd back.’

‘I will speak!’ cried Jacques excitedly, and rushing to the window he began undoing the shutters.

At that moment the howling crowd arrived down below. Pinard advanced to the door and knocked loudly.

‘Open!’ he cried. ‘Open to the sovereign people.’

His gait was still unsteady and his voice thick through drink.

Jacques threw back the shutters and appeared to the crowd.

‘What want you, my friends?’ he shouted. ‘I am an honest *bourgeois* as you are. I work to get my living.’

'It's the man himself, Jacques le Blanc, the entertainer of aristocrats to whom the good Robespierre would have given his due,' replied Pinard.

'I am no aristocrat,' answered Jacques.

'Then,' shouted Pinard, 'open to the sovereign people!'

My friends,' expostulated Jacques, 'do not believe that man.'

'Silence!' cried Pinard. 'Down with the door! You will find bread there in plenty.'

A roar from the people followed.

'Scoundrel!' cried Jacques beside himself with rage.

See you the aristocrat? I will make short work of him,' and drawing out a pistol he levelled it at Jacques. The *entresol* was but fifteen feet from the pavement and Jacques's life would have fallen had that pistol but fulfilled its duty. But the flint fell without any result.

'Down with him and his door!' shouted Pinard furiously, and immediately a shower of stones and bricks fell on the house. The people rushed at the doors and with some large stones tried to force them in. The noise outside was fearful. Those who could not get near enough to aid in the forcing an entrance shouted, yelled, gesticulated and threw missiles of all kinds. Jacques himself fell back struck with a large stone on the head. Many more showered into the room, smashing the mirrors and furniture of which Jacques had been so proud. La Beauce dragged the poor fellow out of reach of the missiles, and, handing him over to Virginie's care, rushed downstairs to the point of danger. There he found Jean, Pierre, and a couple of the serving-men, the two last pale with terror. The moment was a critical one. Outside they could hear the roar of the crowd and the battering of the doors and windows. Every blow resounded through the empty rooms. Although La Beauce had strengthened the door and shutters by placing the tables against them, he knew they could not hold out long. Would relief soon come? By the side of the door, which being the largest aperture was the most dangerous, stood Jean, with his large cavalry sabre in his hand, watching as a cat watches a mousehole. Pierre stood bravely by his side with a meat axe. There, too, La Beauce waited. He had two pistols and his sword.

'It is better, in a crowd, to use cold steel,' muttered Jean without taking his eye from the door.

'Thou art right,' answered the Comte, and he replaced his pistol in his belt and grasped his sword.

At that moment the outer door gave way, and the tables placed against it began to yield.

'All together,' cried Pinard; 'weight must tell. Inside there is excellent wine to refresh you. Together then! Now! Now!'

Back went the feeble defence, gradually, but surely. At last everything gave way with a smash and a dozen men tumbled amid the débris of tables, &c. Rising up they began to scramble over the overturned defence. Now La Beauce, like a skilful general, had arranged those tables and chairs he could not place against the door to make the passage as narrow as possible. Very few could therefore enter at a time. The first over was a brawny fellow with bare arms who brandished a pole-axe. Him Jean struck to the ground with a terrific blow on the head. After him came Pinard. Seeing himself in so critical a position, he held back, and drawing his other pistol aimed it deliberately at La Beauce.

'I have thee now!' he cried, but the pistol missed fire.

At that moment those who came behind forced Pinard on and he came within reach of La Beauce's sword, which passed clean through him. Five or six more men came tumbling over these two and lay there with Jean standing over them. Then there was a pause.

Outside, meanwhile, the shouts and yells were more terrific than ever. But what was this? Blows and shouts! Waiting in breathless eagerness for more assailants, La Beauce and his friends were astonished to find no more came. Leaving Jean and Pierre to keep watch over the fallen foe, the Comte looked through the broken furniture, and saw the crowd outside, cleared out of the street by the men of the Section. Then for the first time he shouted. He leapt over the barrier into the street. The Jacobins were flying, and the Jeunesse Dorée, with their heavy clubs, were chasing them down the street!

At the door of the café lay among the tables some six or seven fellows over whom stood Jean, Pierre, and the two others, who, finding the odds on their side now, showed prodigious courage.

'The first man who rises,' cried Jean, 'I pass my sword through.'

Two of those nearest the door managed to creep through the débris towards the street, and no sooner were there than they took to their legs and fled. The remainder lay still and begged for mercy. La Beauce, with Jean's help, now dragged them up

singly. There was no fight in them, they were humble enough.

'Turn out your pockets, my men,' cried he with authority.

In the pockets of four of the men there was found bread. The fifth had money enough to have bought bread for a week.

'You cry "Bread! bread!" and have plenty!'

'We were led astray,' they answered with abject look.

'Look here, my friends,' said La Beauce. 'If I hand you over to the Section they will show you little mercy. You are a pitiful lot of scoundrels to seek plunder by forcing an honest man's house. My contempt for you is so great that I should be sorry to waste my time in appearing against you. Begone! and be more honest for the future.'

The men slunk away like beaten hounds. There remained now but two, and they were still enough. The man with the pole-axe and Pinard. The first was quite dead. By La Beauce's orders he was carried out into the street and left there.

'Let the authorities, who are to blame for all this, gather up their dead,' he said sternly.

In the street there were one or two other forms of men, whether dead or dying they had not time to ascertain. Every window was closely shuttered, it might have been midnight, so deserted did the usually busy thoroughfare appear. Yet was Paris in a state of wild excitement. On all sides there was shouting and noise. Down the Rue St. Honoré bodies of men were seen hurrying. In the distance rang the *tocsin* of the Tuileries, and from several quarters the noise of drums beating the *générale* reached them.

Under the circumstances La Beauce thought it would be wise to barricade the door once more and wait. They therefore repaired the damage of the assault, and having more time, contrived to make their defences even more secure than they were before.

Pinard alone remained with them. He was yet alive, and was borne into the inner room, where he lay stretched on one of the tables from which he had so often insulted his host, while feeding sumptuously at his expense. He was yet insensible. In his right hand he tightly held the pistol he had tried to fire at La Beauce. Leaving him to Jean and Pierre, with instructions that he should be well looked to, La Beauce hurried up stairs to see how things went with Jacques.

CHAPTER LXIV.

END OF PINARD.

JACQUES soon recovered his senses, but his nervous state was alarming. The noise outside seemed at times to fill him with despair.

‘When will this end? Are we always to have *émeutes* and bloodshed? Will there never be peace?’

At other times he started up, and the women, for Annette and Louison assisted Virginie, had great difficulty in preventing him from rushing down stairs to help.

‘Let me go to defend my property. Are these brigands to wreck my house and ruin me without my striking a blow?’

Virginie, with a sinking heart, assured him that all was well.

‘Well!’ he cried. ‘They tried to force my door at Sèvres. I was there, however, to protect thee, my child!’

‘Art thou not with us now, father, to protect us?’

‘That’s true! And I’ll do it!’

Wounded and weak as he was, he insisted on being placed near the door of the room, and, with his knife in his hand, listened for the expected rush of feet.

He looked a ghastly sight, with his head bound up in a blood-stained bandage and his pallid face beneath, with its fixed eyes and firmly-set mouth. The two women were awe-struck at his appearance, and the terror they felt was augmented by their fears for the effect of the tension of the wounded man’s nerves.

They heard the cries of the mob as it forced the door, and both Annette and Virginie recognised Pinard’s voice giving them time to enable them to exert their strength simultaneously. They heard the defences creak and give way, but at the same moment they heard the shouts of the forces of the Section and the howls of the mob as they were driven back. And by the tramp of the feet in the street they knew they were saved.

Virginie rushed to the window in time to see the crowd of insurrectionists swept back towards the Tuileries.

‘Father,’ she cried, ‘we are saved! It is the Section Lepelletier come to help us.’

Jacques gave a gasp and fell back fainting in the chair in which they had placed him.

When La Beauce entered they had only partially succeeded

in rousing him. He whispered his reassuring news to Virginie. All was well, no one had been hurt except some of those who had tried to force their way into the café.

'And Pinard?' asked Annette.

'He's badly wounded.'

The woman at once rose, she had been kneeling by the side of Jacques.

'See, mademoiselle,' she whispered humbly to Louison who was standing by, 'be so good as to take my place and support M. le Blanc.'

'How?' asked Virginie. 'Art thou going to leave us?'

'Ah, madame!' said Annette, 'he is a bad man and has brought this on himself, but now he is wounded shall I not be by his side?'

'But,' whispered Virginie, 'thou saidest but now thou would'st leave him.'

'Ah! while he was well; but though I despise him and hate him, it is for me to tend him in his misfortune.'

'Good!' cried Louison roughly. 'Thou art a brave woman. Go!'

So Annette crept out of the room and made her way down to the café, where she found Pinard stretched on the table as we have described. His face was deathlike and his lips tightly shut, a slight foam mixed with blood at the corners of his mouth. The doctor, whom Pierre had fetched, had just examined him. He shook his head despondingly.

'Not much hope for this one,' he said. Nevertheless he administered some cordial and Pinard began to give some signs of life.

'See,' said the doctor, 'he bleeds inwardly; the question is how long that can last?'

Annette stole to her husband's side. Hers was the first face he saw when he opened his eyes.

'It's thou,' he murmured. 'How camest thou here?'

'Keep yourself quiet,' whispered Annette.

'Quiet! when I am suffering torture. Give me some drink.'

The doctor held the glass to his lips and Pinard drank eagerly.

'More,' he murmured.

'*Diable!*' cried the doctor. 'Here is a man accustomed to alcohol. It takes half a pint to bring him to. Bad chance! bad chance!' he said to himself.

Pinard seemed to recover under this last dose.

'Listen,' he said to his wife. 'Who brought thee here?'

'I came by myself.'

Pinard looked at his wife with an expression that meant murder had he been well.

'Thou didst warn them,' he said.

'I did.'

'How dared'st thou do so?'

'I dared because I loved madame.'

Pinard moved his right arm and turned as though he would raise himself, but he sank back again and lay still, his eyes still fixed in vindictive hate on Aunette. After a pause he spoke again.

'Where is M. de la Beauce?' he asked.

'Up stairs with Maître Jacques.'

'Is Le Blanc hurt?'

'Yes.'

'Badly?'

'Yes.'

A smile broke over the wounded man's lips. Again he moved his arm, he seemed to be knocking something on the table.

'Tell M. de la Beauce I would speak with him before I die,' he murmured.

Annette was going to fulfil his errand, when Pierre said:

'M. le Blanc hurt? Why didst thou not say so at once? Here I have been keeping the doctor with this rascal when better people required his services! Come, M. le Docteur, follow me. I will tell M. de la Beauce what this man says.'

In truth, Pierre had no love for Pinard, having suffered under his tyranny during the time he was an *habitué* of the café, nor did his present condition inspire him with pity.

There was silence in the darkened room, outside still were heard distant shouts and the tramp of feet. Pinard lay quiet with his eye fixed on Annette. She, with a moistened handkerchief, ever and anon wiped the damp beads from his brow and the foam from his lips.

'Is he coming?' asked the wounded man.

'He will come, I am sure,' answered Annette. 'He is good, he will not refuse your wish.'

'Traitor!' growled Pinard, his eye still on his wife.

In the background, hardly seen, sat Jean, his drawn sabre on his knees, and his attention divided between the door and

the wounded man. When he heard footsteps in the deserted street he grasped his sword, but these passed rapidly along. Then Jean's eye wandered to Pinard. In the distance still were heard shouts and yells, in the room nothing but the stertorous breathing of the wounded man and the ticking of the large clock that hung over the *comptoir* where Virginie and Célimène usually sat.

A few minutes passed slowly. At length the door opened and La Beauce appeared. He approached the sick man.

'You wished to see me,' he said.

Pinard's eye brightened.

'Give me drink!' he murmured; 'I would speak with monsieur.'

Annette poured out some more cognac, which Pinard eagerly swallowed.

'Prop me up,' he growled.

Annette lifted him up.

'Higher,' he murmured.

Annette supported him till he was nearly in a sitting position, then suddenly he raised his hand in which he still grasped his pistol and again levelled it at La Beauce. Again the hammer fell, the flint flashed in the darkened room, but the pistol missed fire.

With an angry snarl he turned on his wife.

'Thou hast done this!' he cried.

'I did,' answered Annette.

He raised his hand with the pistol in it and would have struck her, but La Beauce seized his arm. Uttering a cry of rage he sank back, the blood came to his lips and he lay still.

The faithful Annette again and again cooled his brow with her handkerchief and moistened his parched lips. Once, when she saw his eye fixed upon her, she bent over him and said:

'Why dost thou hate them? They never did thee anything but good.'

'Good! I hate him!' muttered the sinking ruffian. 'It was he deprived me of my best patron the Duc d'Orleans, by taking away the woman he married. It was he sentenced me to be turned out of the army and brought about my long illness. It was he prevented me making money at the gaming-table. It was he that killed me. And it is thou hast prevented my revenging myself. May my curse be on thee! May'st thou die rotting in misery. May'st thou——'

Pinard spoke with difficulty, stopping between each word and gasping for breath. When he got thus far the poor woman who had so carefully tended him placed her hand on his mouth to stop him. The ruffian seized it with his teeth with a savage snarl and bit it with all his remaining strength. La Beauce had much ado to force him to leave his hold. In his struggles he bit and writhed like a dying wild cat. It required both Jean and the Comte to hold him on the table on which he lay muttering fearful oaths. Then, finally, with a dreadful effort, he raised himself up, threw up his hands and fell forward dead in their arms.

Annette uttered no cry; she made no complaint. With her hand terribly lacerated she still tried to help and soothe her husband, she whispered in the midst of the ravings of the dying man: 'Pardon him, monsieur, he does not know what he says.'

It was only when his dying spasm came, that, overcome by pain and emotion, she sank on one of the well-stuffed seats that formed part of the luxurious furniture of Jacques's café and fainted.

CHAPTER LXV.

MAÎTRE JACQUES.

ALTHOUGH Jacques le Blanc recovered consciousness very soon after the doctor had applied remedies, he remained all day in a very nervous state. The cries and shouts that reached his ears agitated him greatly. The march of armed men and the tramp of a disorderly crowd alike excited him. All day long Paris was in a wild state of commotion. The drums beating and *tocsins* ringing made a continual uproar. So Jacques tossed in feverish unrest on his bed. Now he would start up and commence a disjointed speech, as though he were haranguing a crowd; he would implore them to spare his property and family; he would impress on them that he was a *bourgeois* living by the work of his hands even as they were. At other times he would groan and weep when the distant tumult seemed to grow louder.

'No rest,' he would sob; 'no quiet! no peace! When will it end? Always, always bloodshed. Is this a republic?'

And then he would hold a discussion with some imaginary person, in which he would grow incoherent and appeal to his friend Rousselet as though he were present, denouncing the Republic itself in no measured terms.

The doctor, who came again during the afternoon, told Virginie that, though, no doubt, the blow on his head had brought this delirium upon him, it was due, in a great measure, to previous brain irritation.

‘I have several such cases,’ he said. ‘The terrors of the Revolution have upset more than one brain. Yet there is no reason why M. le Blanc should not recover if only he can be kept quiet.’

Célimène, having now come to aid Virginie, the two took it in turns to watch by the stricken man’s pillow and soothe him with the remedies prescribed by the doctor. Louison lent her aid when she could be spared from the care of little Jacques, who, of course, had to be kept out of the way lest he should disturb his grandfather. It was a great contrast. The strong man, tossing about, agitated by every noise in the street, and the child delightedly watching through the chinks of the closed shutters the passing to and fro of the different bodies of men, and laughing with infantine glee at the unusual sight! La Beauce, in a state of the greatest suspense, divided his time between the sick man’s room and the fortified café, in the inner room of which lay the stiff, inanimate form of Pinard. It was only towards evening he ventured forth through the back way to gain news, for to him the distant noise was unintelligible. He found vast crowds surrounding the Tuileries, gesticulating and shouting. Inside all was, he heard, a wild confusion, amid which some had lost their lives. The family took their meals in silence, anxiously waiting for the result of the *émeute*. Waiting! waiting! with the distant din rising and falling, and constant cries of ‘Bread! and the Constitution of ’93.’ Nor was it till past midnight that they heard of the victory of the Convention. Then it was that the Section Lepelletier marched home in triumph, having at last rescued the representatives of the nation. As they passed up the street the sick man was again roused, and sobbed forth:

‘Always, always! No peace! no rest! Bloodshed, bloodshed!’

There was peace, however, the next day, and for several days after, and Jacques le Blanc became better. Soon he was able to sit up in an arm-chair, whence he watched with eager eyes his daughter and Célimène as they moved about the room. Then, in a short time, he was allowed to play with the boy, in whose artless prattle he seemed to find constant amusement. The little Jacques treated his grandfather as his equal. The two played together, the old man quite as eager in the game as his own grandson;

Célimène would join too, at times, and mingle her merry laugh with theirs. She had from the first quite understood Jacques's nature. He had somehow stood in awe of Virginie since her return. Perhaps he had a fear that his want of tact might lead him to offend her again. Had he not cruelly offended her once already? This serene and graceful lady, who called him 'Father,' was on her side unconscious of the distance she had placed between herself and him. She was perfect in her behaviour; she was attentive and deferential. It was not in her nature to pet him and make much of him as Célimène could. Even her own child, whom she adored, and who viewed her with much the same reverence and love she herself bestowed on her husband, confided more in the congenial Célimène than in his mother. In all great things, in sickness or in trouble, he flew to his mother; in his trifling vexations, in his games, he sought Célimène. And it was so with Jacques. It was Virginie who tended him, who gave him his medicines, and told him when he should go to bed and when he should get up; but it was Célimène who knew how to arrange his pillows for him, and talk with him; and, though before his daughter he never showed the ill-humour so common in invalids, the coaxing and petting of Célimène alone would un-wrinkle his forehead and bring a smile to his lips. To her and the little Jacques he would talk unceasingly of Virginie when she was young, of his own youth, of his wife, and of his friend Rousselet. Of these two last he often spoke as though they were alive. Sometimes he would remain in deep thought, and then he would be restless, and watch Virginie in an eager manner, as though he had something on his mind that he did not dare to mention. Often Célimène had noted this.

'What is it, Père Jacques?' she would ask.

'Nothing, *ma petite poule*.'

'But there is something, I am sure,' and she would coax him to try and find out what it was, but without success.

'Hist! When I'm better,' he would say, and nod his head in the direction of Virginie. 'Not now!'

In the corner of their sitting-room stood the piano Jacques had bought at Sèvres for his daughter. It had remained there unopened since its arrival in Paris. The troubles and anxieties of the times had made Virginie neglect her music, to which she had been devoted. During the Terror it would have been dangerous to indulge in an art which implied cultivation and education, within the reach of the aristocracy alone. After the

9th Thermidor Virginie had been to several concerts, and the delight she had experienced at hearing good music had re-kindled the old fire within her. She had found time to practise in spite of the duties of the café, regaining much of her old mastery of execution. When Jacques was convalescent he delighted to hear her sing the old songs he had loved so much at the Couronne d'Or. He would lie back in his chair and listen with half-closed eyes in a state of ecstasy. The old tunes took him back to old times. They caused him to forget the trouble and trials of more recent date, making the present a dream and the dim past a reality. For what had music to do with the Revolution or the Terror? It was associated with peace or rest, not with violence and bloodshed. It gave peace to this poor, broken invalid, and made him forget all else. It seemed to Riouffe, who was often admitted to the family circle, that such a voice and such a woman could win back anyone from death itself. He could readily see how hopeless was Rousselet's love, but, as he called to mind the dry, unpoetic look of the man, he wondered how it was he could have appreciated so much which appealed to the imagination of a poetic nature. He could not understand that a seemingly stern manner may conceal a warm heart, even as a common cover may hold the sublimest effort of genius.

When the warm sun of June shone upon them Jacques had so far recovered as to be able to walk about, and it was proposed that he should go and bask in the invigorating sunshine of the Jardin National, as the garden of the Tuileries was now called. But he showed most unaccountable signs of unwillingness to leave the quiet of his apartment. In vain Virginie urged that he would gain strength and health by going out.

'I am well here,' cried he in pitiful accents. 'Why not let me be?' Then Célimène tried to coax him.

'Père Jacques, come with Petit Jacques and me to the Jardin National,' she urged. 'You should see the boy play and run about. It does one good to see how he enjoys himself.'

But Jacques could not be persuaded. At length he said one day to Célimène:

'*Ma petite*, I could not see the café all shut up; it would break my heart.'

'But, Père Jacques, it is not shut. Virginie and I do all the business, and Pierre superintends the café.'

Jacques had been pacing the little sitting-room with rather tottering steps. He stopped suddenly.

'Pierre!' he cried. 'Pierre could do this! Impossible!'

'Oh, Pierre is not a fool,' said Célimène, laughing. 'Besides, has he not been with you all these years? Where could he learn better?'

'Pierre!' muttered Jacques. 'Pierre! He never could flavour a *consommé*! Pierre!' and the good man sighed as he sank into his comfortable chair. He remained silent for a minute, then he started to his feet.

'*Allons!*' he cried, 'we will go together to the gardens to-day!' They brought him his hat and stout stick, and he slowly descended the stairs between Célimène and Virginie. They made their exit by the large door, common to the house. Then they walked slowly past the open window of the café. Inside was the usual bustle. People were having their *déjeuner*, for it was nearly mid-day.

'Pierre! a *marmiton* of yesterday! Pierre!' Jacques muttered as they passed on with little Jacques trotting round them like a playful puppy.

In the National Gardens they met La Beauce, and they all sat and watched the people enjoying the sunshine like themselves. Children were playing among the trees. Young men with green collars to their coats and their hair dressed in long plaits, with large knobbed sticks in their hands, were marching hither and thither, now ogling some fancifully dressed girl with tight-fitting drapery and hair dressed *en victime*, raised clear at the nape of the neck as though prepared for the fatal blade of the guillotine, now laughing merrily together. The very National Representatives seemed to have forgotten the 1st Prairial, and the recently solemnised funeral of the murdered Feraud, as they gaily hastened up to the Tuileries, now called the 'Palais National,' to assist in framing the new Convention, which was to bring peace to France. All was gay and happy, and even the old Tuileries Palace looked young and new, with its many bright, fluttering tricolour flags, forgetful of the long line of kings it had sheltered. Alas! the young king who should have been there had but recently died of neglect and ill-treatment; and he who had succeeded was far away, living among the enemies of his country!

Jacques sat reclining on a seat in the garden watching the gay scene with half-closed eyes. Virginie and La Beauce talked together in a low tone. Célimène ran hither and thither with the laughing boy, watched and ogled by many a young Muscadin. Opposite the Tuileries was the *Placé Louis XV.*, at that time

called the Place de la Révolution, soon to be the Place de la Concorde. A little crowd was gathered round the centre, where stood a colossal statue of Liberty, and again at its foot was the 'Guillotine.' It was June 17. The last victims of the Revolution were there suffering for their attachment to the Republic. Romme, Gougon, Bourbotte, and others, some only lifeless corpses, some half dead from self-inflicted wounds, all alike, living and dead, to pass beneath the fatal axe!

Luckily Jacques was not aware of this little episode, to which few of the gaily dressed frequenters of the gardens were attracted. There was hardly any crowd round the engine of death. 'Enjoy your triumph, Messieurs Royalists,' cried one of these unfortunates bitterly, as he looked towards the thoughtless idlers in the 'National Gardens.'

The sunshine did Jacques good and he walked back home with firmer steps. When he arrived at the door of the café, of his own accord he entered and glanced round. Pierre met his old master with a bow.

'Ah, Maître Jacques,' he said with humble smile. 'If I only could have learnt some of thy secrets!'

'I will teach thee yet,' answered the pleased *chef* with a smile. Then, looking round and seeing all arranged as in his day, he added: 'thou art a brave lad, Pierre; I little thought it of thee; I took thee for a fool.'

'Nay, Maître Jacques, I was one not to have learnt more while under thy care!' cried Pierre, who was shrewd enough to know how to flatter his former master.

Jacques patted his pupil patronisingly on the shoulder. 'Wait till I am well,' he said with a pleased smile, and as he mounted to the apartment he seemed to have gained strength already. From that day he went each morning to the *café*. He gave his advice on each dish as it left the kitchen. He tasted each sauce, and freely denounced its faults.

'They are not right. They want seasoning; there is no *cachet* about them,' he cried. Poor fellow! It was his own palate that was at fault, and once having seasoned a dish for the little family according to his ideas, it was so strong as to cause the tears to come to Célimène's eyes, and though Jacques declared himself satisfied, he was made quite ill by having partaken too freely of it. Yet both La Beauce and Virginie complimented the poor fellow on its success, though the latter forbade her son to touch it!

But if Jacques was seemingly content with the management

of the Café de la Grande Nation, he would not allow any praise to Pierre. 'It is very good as a makeshift,' he said; 'wait till I can resume my old work.'

In the meanwhile he was content to be an invalid, consoling himself with talking of the future, and mingling it too often with the past. In truth he felt himself still too weak for the work. His ideas were often involved, nor could he fix his attention for long on any serious subject.

'To do myself justice I must have all my wits about me. Head, eye, and mind must work together. At present I should burn my sauce and could not be certain of my quantities. Later on—who knows?' Then the poor fellow would sigh and be silent, till roused by the prattle of his grandchild or the coaxing of Célimène.

La Beauce had quite recovered his health and had notified his recovery to the administration, but to his astonishment he had been told that the country had no further occasion for his services! He went at once to his friend Carnot to demand an explanation.

'My dear General,' said Carnot sadly, 'I am no longer at the head of the war department. M. Audry has succeeded me in the administration, and "my men," as they are called, are viewed with suspicion. It would, perhaps, surprise you to find you were looked upon as a Jacobin, but it's true nevertheless. You owe it to my friendship for you. It is jealousy of the past.'

So was La Beauce doomed once more to idleness. His friend Bonaparte, as he now wrote his name, dropping the Italian spelling, was loud in his abuse of the authorities.

'They know not their best officers,' he said; 'they leave the army to men of their own level. Wait! Our stars will rise in spite of them.'

Bonaparte took him to the house of a Madame de Permon, who received a great deal, and, as Bonaparte expressed it, 'held a *salon*,' where La Beauce saw many of those who had returned from emigration. Madame de Permon herself was a very handsome woman, of much natural talent and considerable force of character, and her daughter, 'Loulou,' a bright, merry girl. Virginie, however, on being taken to the house, expressed herself with unwonted acerbity.

'The place is full of pretentious *énigrés*,' she said, 'who seem to have learnt nothing by their troubles. Yes! Madame de Permon is handsome and agreeable, but she makes herself

ridiculous with her Greek Emperors, and her descent from the Commènes! The girl is pleasant and pretty, though somewhat spoilt, and M. Albert, the son, certainly plays beautifully on the harp.'

It might have been that Virginie's humble origin displeased these *émigrés*, who could not forget that the Comtesse de la Beauce had been Mademoiselle le Blanc. Virginie was quick enough to see that she was not received as one of the elect, and to dread that her husband might resent any slight put upon her; she therefore went but seldom to the house, though she often urged the Comte to go, as the society of the place was a relief to him. To her it was enough to feel that her husband was safe, that the bullets of the Austrians no longer threatened him, and that the awful shadow of the guillotine no longer spread across his path.

In the café, where La Beauce was in the habit of seeing his friends, he met a certain Le Maitre, who frequently engaged him in arguments on political questions. Le Maitre made no concealment of the fact that he was a Royalist. He tried his best to convince La Beauce that the return of royalty was the only solution of the political position. He even went so far as to try and gain his adhesion to a Royalist rising, and ventured to bribe him with the offer of high rank in the royal army on the return of the exiled king. But La Beauce refused to be bought into any plot.

'I have served my king,' he said, 'when in serving him I felt I was serving my country. Till his cause is that of the nation I can never serve him again. I could not raise up civil war in France to be made commander-in-chief. The present government is feeble—rotten if you will; yet it represents the National idea. The King and Royalty are distasteful to the people. In the Vendée itself the Royal cause has brought nothing but disaster and bloodshed. Would you have the whole of France one vast Vendée?'

Le Maitre came back to the charge more than once.

'Paris,' he said, 'is full of Royalists only waiting to declare themselves. The time will soon come when a man must join us who wishes to be on the winning side. Why not join while there is some merit in doing so, that your reward may be assured?'

But La Beauce refused. He had no confidence in Louis XVIII. and his *émigré* advisers. He knew the army to be Republican, and without the army even Austrian bayonets could not restore

the King. Nevertheless, he felt that some serious rising was impending. The Royalists made no secret of their hopes. General Bonaparte, however, laughed at their chance.

‘A set of silly fops!’ he said, ‘they had the game in their hands more than once. Even on August 10, had there been a man amongst them, they might have finished the Revolution. Have they anyone now? Depend on it, all the real talent is on the other side.’

CHAPTER LXVI.

JACQUES SERVES HIS LAST DINNER.

To Louison, at this time, fell the charge of the little Jacques, but in the household duties she was now aided by Annette Pinard. Louison acquiesced in the change with considerable grumbling. When, however, she found how humble Annette was, and how devoted she showed herself to Virginie, she unbent towards her. Not that she deprived herself of the luxury of scolding. It was a new pleasure to her to be allowed the free use of her tongue, and Annette had the benefit. She bore the infliction without a murmur. To her the La Beauce family occupied the position formerly held by the defunct Pinard. They were in a sphere above her, and Louison caught some of the glory reflected from them.

It was not long before Annette learnt Louison’s secret. At first, by simple praise, Louison let her know how greatly she esteemed Jean. Then, one day, she said:

‘There’s a man! Hast thou ever seen his like? What a brave heart! Eh?’ and she would glance at Annette as though to dare her to say anything disparaging of Jean.

‘Ah, yes,’ sighed Annette. ‘Men! I have done with them.’

‘Thou knowest,’ said Louison defiantly, ‘there are men and men. Some good, some bad. Thine was bad enough for anybody.’

As Annette said nothing Louison continued.

‘I knew Pinard. I remember him at Sèvres. He tried to bribe me to carry letters to my mistress; me, Louison Chaplin. He told me they were from one of the greatest in the land! As though I were a go-between to do his dirty work. He was a bad, bad man, that’s what he was.’

'I loved him greatly once,' sighed Annette.

'Ah, thou knowest what it is to love!—thou! See,' and Louison produced from her mysterious box the battered cockade. 'That was *his*. I stole it and placed in his hat the one he wears. Ah, the gallant fellow.' Louison bestowed on her treasure a kiss of such fervour as surely warranted its application to something more responsive than faded worsted.

Louison found a sympathetic listener in Annette. The two women worked together to keep Jean's wardrobe in a neat state. There were no stockings more neatly darned, no buttons so well sewed on as Jean's. Yet he was quite unconscious of the labour bestowed on him. One day Annette took him some stockings Louison had mended.

'See, Monsieur Jean,' she said, 'how beautifully Mademoiselle Louison has mended these stockings. There never was a better worker than she.'

'She is a good woman,' said Jean gravely.

'She is true as steel to those she loves,' said Annette pointedly.

'I know she has faithfully served Madame la Comtesse,' said Jean as he turned away.

Jean had constituted himself nurse to Jacques le Blanc, and was ever in attendance to help his dear mistress. Yet he did not forget Louison's attention.

'I thank thee,' he said simply to her when next he saw her. 'Thou hast been very good to me. I fear they wanted mending sadly.'

'Art thou idiotic?' cried Louison, blushing with pleasure all the same. 'What is my duty but to keep the things of the family in good repair. Thine were in a disgraceful state.' She was like a leopard or panther, and showed her affection by playfully scratching and giving pain. Yet when she was alone with Annette she shed tears.

'How good he is! Hast thou noticed his devotion to madame? Ah, there is a man!'

Célimène, more than once, tried to further poor Louison's chances.

'See, Jean,' she would cry, 'what a good girl is Louison! She will make a man an excellent wife.'

'Excellent, mademoiselle,' answered Jean, nor had he the slightest idea of Célimène's kindly intention on his behalf.

'Hast thou ever thought of marrying?' asked Célimène.

Jean's pale face blushed crimson.

'Mademoiselle,' he said gravely, 'for such as I there is no such happiness.'

He spoke so solemnly that the girl was silenced.

Jacques progressed slowly throughout the summer, but was still very weak and feeble. Perfect quiet was what the doctor enjoined. So far the patient himself seconded the efforts of science. He lived quietly enough with his family, and contented himself with their society and the daily visit he paid to the café. Once or twice a sudden irritability came upon him which it required all the authority of his daughter and all the coaxing of Célimène to soothe. After these attacks he was visibly enfeebled. Yet, between whiles, he picked up strength and the doctor was hopeful.

When the summer was over and autumn set in the quiet of Paris was again disturbed. The Convention had at last made a Constitution, but the Constitution was not acceptable to the *bourgeoisie*. The Sections were again in a ferment, and this time at the head of the sections was the Section Lepelletier, or, as they were called at first, Filles St. Thomas, who surely deserved well of the Convention, having saved it on the memorable 1st Prairial. The Café de la Grande Nation was in the district Le Pelletier. So the drums beat again and the *tocsin* rang once more, and poor Jacques, pale and excited, with eager face, asked constantly: 'What is this new excitement?' In vain Virginie and Célimène assured him it was nothing. Soon sentries were placed in their very street, and from the room where Jacques lay they could hear each passer-by challenged. The café was shut up. Paris was in a state of siege. The forces of the Section, most of them the darlings of the Jeunesse Dorée, passed up and down the street shouting seditious cries, while at the Tuileries end the troops of the Convention strove to repress the disorders and were received with musket shots. At these poor Jacques quite gave way. His brain lost all its power. He raved constantly of all the old episodes of Revolution. Now he was at Sèvres and the King and Queen were passing escorted by the mad troops of women, the heads of the two Gardes du Corps carried before them. Now he babbled with friend Rousselet of the Jacobins, and then he shrieked as he seemed to see the Swiss Guard butchered on the 10th of August. The massacres of September, the trial and death of Rousselet, his own arrest, all were mingled up together, and then—oh, horror!—he fancied himself in the *souricière* of the prison of Les Carmes with the poor, mad

Nouget. To the two women and Jean, who watched by his bed, it was terrible to listen to his ravings and to watch the poor sufferer in his agony. Yet for twenty-four hours this continued. As the tumult heightened Jacques's terrors increased, until at last, when the first cannonade of the 13th Vendémiaire took place, he raised himself in his bed and implored to be spared. The relentless cannons continued their hoarse roar; the muskets of the Section responded in the Rue St. Honoré close by; the shouts of the combatants could be heard; poor Jacques tossed and raved and the two women watched. One of them, besides her terror for her father, lent anxious ear to the cannon sounds, for her husband was there. General Bonaparte had sent a short note to La Beauce begging him to come to the Convention, that the country was in danger, and it behoved all good men to rally round the central power. The Comte had obeyed the summons, and Jean would have gone too had not Virginie detained him to help with the sick man. So at each discharge she trembled for her husband as she watched her father, and when that father murmured in his agony, 'No peace, no rest; always bloodshed. Always! always!' she felt an echo to the cry in her heart. By the time the cannon ceased, and all sounds were still save the distant, measured tread of armed men, Jacques sank back exhausted. The doctor, who managed about this time to steal round to see his patient, shook his head. Alas for poor Jacques! all was nearly over. No hope! They knew it as they watched the kind face of the doctor, they could almost have told it by the flushed cheeks of the senseless man, whose hands moved to and fro in aimless restlessness, whose lips formed words of no sound, or, when words came, they had no sequence!

While the doctor was there La Beauce stole into the room and silently embraced Virginie. He was pale, dirty, and blackened with smoke.

'What news?' whispered Virginie.

'Good,' answered he in the same tone. 'All is over.'

The sick man's eyes opened, he seemed to have caught the words.

'All over?' he cried. 'Good! Then the Republic has gone!' And he burst into a terrible laugh, dry and hard; more distressing to hear than the ravings of the preceding hours. Then he fell back exhausted once more, but in his exhaustion words escaped as though he were arguing with someone.

The doctor felt his pulse and placed cooled cloths on his forehead. He then poured some soothing draught down his parched throat, and the patient slept, if it could be called sleep to toss restlessly to and fro and to move the arms and hands unceasingly.

‘He will not wake for some hours now,’ said the doctor. ‘I must beg you ladies to think a little of yourselves and leave him to us.’

‘But if he should wake?’ whispered Virginie.

‘Have no fear! He will not wake just yet.’

‘And when he wakes?’

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. But he at last persuaded Virginie and Célimène to retire to rest and leave the watching to Jean and La Beauce. So the man who had fought and contributed to the noise that had brought about this last crisis, sat down and mused on the work he had done unconsciously; till he was worn out by fatigue, insensibly dozed off in his chair, and left Jean alone.

With dogged, fixed look Jean kept his watch. So deep his eyes seemed to be under his shaggy brow that in the dim light of the room it was difficult to tell whether he too slept. Only when the sufferer moved restlessly, Jean rose and changed the cloths on his head, and by the promptitude with which he performed his duty it was clear he was on the alert. Then, with his attention on the patient, he sat **watching**: So intent was he that when a hand was placed on his shoulder he started; he had not heard anyone enter the room.

‘Thou art tired, let me watch for thee,’ whispered a voice. It was Louison!

‘I want no rest,’ answered Jean in the same tone.

‘At least,’ whispered Louison, ‘take this warm *bouillon* I have brought thee; it will refresh thee.’

Jean turned towards her.

‘I thank thee,’ he said. ‘It was good of thee to think of me.’

He took the bowl in both hands and drank the contents, while Louison watched with delight.

‘It does me good to see thee drink that.’

‘And me too,’ said Jean.

There was a pause, the two watched poor Jacques.

‘He is very bad,’ said Louison,

‘He could not be worse.’

Another pause. Louison's eyes wandered round the room. She perceived La Beauce, who slept heavily in an easy-chair.

'M. le Comte sleeps there?' she asked.

'The General' ('twas so Jean always addressed La Beauce) 'has had a hard day's work.'

'And thou?'

'I—I am nothing. I require little sleep.'

Louison put her hand caressingly on Jean's shoulder.

'Thou art a fine fellow. *Allez!*' she said, and love beamed from her eyes as she looked into his face. But Jean saw nothing; he was watching the sick man.

Then Louison gave a sigh and left the room. All her battery of fascination had failed, she could do no more, and was afraid of remaining lest she should shed tears and be found out. 'No,' she thought to herself, 'I must gain him without that. If he cannot see for himself, it is not for me to enlighten him. I would not take so mean an advantage of such a man!'

In the morning, when Virginie stole back to the sick room, Jacques was still under the influence of the opiate he had taken, Jean watching by his side and La Beauce fast asleep covered by a rug Jean had placed round him.

'How, Jean, hast thou watched by thyself?' she said kindly. 'Thou must need sleep; go and rest.'

'I want no sleep, madame,' answered Jean.

'Nay, Jean, I must insist on thee taking thy turn of rest. We can take our turn now, for we are fresh. Go then, that thou mayest be ready when we require thee.'

Jean saluted, as he would have saluted his commanding officer, and with a noiseless foot withdrew.

When Jacques shook off the narcotic he had taken, he still wandered in his mind. But he no longer raved of the Revolution. As he grew more feeble his thoughts seemed to reach far back to the episodes of his earlier life. He was courting his wife or laughing with his child, or more often preparing for a sumptuous feast. At last the cares of his business seemed entirely to absorb him—an endless preparation, with muttered explanations, expostulations, and even abuse, in which latter, it must be owned, poor Pierre came in for a liberal share. So passed the day. The doctor, when he came once more, said he could do nothing; the case was hopeless; even if the poor man recovered he could never have the use of his reason. There was no hope for poor Jacques.

What more distressing than watching by the bedside of a

loved one, knowing the case to be without hope ! The helplessness of affection then ! The longing to relieve pain ; the utter inability ! All Virginie's feelings of contrition came back to her. Had she loved this father as she ought to have loved him ? He was *bourgeois*, common, without refinement, but he had loved her truly, and what did she not owe to him ? If she was refined, it was through him ; if she was educated, to whom did she owe it ? If she was worthy of the station to which she had been raised, was it not through his self-denial ? As she knelt by his bedside now and took his burning, yet clammy hand and kissed it, she reproached herself with her want of love. Ah ; if he could only recover, she might yet show him that his love had not been wasted. She leaned over him and whispered,

'Father ! father !'

The dying man turned towards her.

'Sit still, my little one, while I finish this,' he murmured.

'But one minute. See, it rises. You would not have me spoil my work. Quiet, my child ; one minute.'

So had he often spoken to her in the old time, years ago, when she was a little child ! She caught the restless hand once more.

'Father, do you know me ?'

'Patience, patience ! Is all ready now ?' cried Jacques. 'All, all ! Yes, everything is in order.' He looked round the room with glazed eyes. 'All ready !' There was a pause. Then, with a formal voice, he said, '*Monsieur est servi*,' and fell back heavily on his pillow. A few gasps, and his breath grew slower. Then stopped, went on again—stopped once more, and all was over.

His last dinner had been cooked. Everything was to his satisfaction. His work was done.

So died Jacques le Blanc ; to the last eager about his work ; to the last, to the best of his ability, an artist.

(To be continued.)

Towards the North Pole.¹

IN our time the knowledge of the earth's surface has been greatly enlarged. Africa has been explored to a great extent, the inner parts of Asia have been reached by energetic travellers, the American continents are known very nearly in their whole extension, the Greenland glacier has been crossed, and in Australia much has also been done. Indeed, before long, these continents will be fairly well known all through. There are, however, two parts of our globe which have hitherto most obstinately resisted all travellers, and where exploration has made very slow progress. These two parts are the regions round the Poles.

The interest of unknown regions in all other parts of the world is to some extent diminished by the fact that we can form a fairly correct idea of their appearance and nature from other countries in similar latitudes and with similar climates which have already been explored. Nevertheless, geographical explorations have nowhere failed to yield valuable results to science and humanity.

In the case of the polar regions, however, it is different. We have no experience which will guide us to any certain conclusions, and the conditions are such that the most ingenious speculations are apt to prove fallacious. A good example of how the *savants* may be led astray by preconceived ideas was afforded by our expedition across Greenland. We found in the interior of that continent such meteorological conditions as no one had expected before our start, and our observations may probably considerably alter existing theories on the subject of the Great Ice Age of Europe and America.

As science has advanced and the world has become more and more known, problems have been formulated which can only be

¹ The Norwegian National Assembly has this summer granted a sum of 200,000 kroner (11,000*l.*) as a contribution to the expenses of a Norwegian Polar Expedition, to be led by the author.

solved by observations in the regions of the poles; and it is hardly possible to study geology, meteorology, physical geography, and many other sciences, without being stopped by important questions which can only be answered in the Arctic or Antarctic regions, and in regard to which we can now only offer highly uncertain hypotheses.

Since, therefore, it is only in these regions that these branches of science can be developed, the question 'Of what use is a polar expedition?' is almost equivalent to the question 'Of what use is the advancement of knowledge?'

Each polar region is interesting in its own way, and we are not at all entitled to say that the exploration of the one would be of more importance than that of the other. It is certainly the North Pole which has hitherto attracted the greatest amount of attention, but the chief reason for this is probably simply the circumstance that it is situated in our own hemisphere.

There is a striking difference between the two poles; the South Pole is surrounded, at a considerable distance, by a great ocean, whilst it is probably situated in an extensive continent covered by an immense ice-sheet, many times as thick and extensive as that of Greenland. The exploration of this ice-sheet would be a scientific event of the highest importance, and nobody can doubt that one day it will be carried out. There is, however, a difficulty which has prevented most explorers from making the attempt, and that is the necessity of leaving the ships.

The safest way in which the South Pole can be reached and the Antarctic ice-sheet explored must be somewhat similar to that in which we crossed Greenland. The distance we covered there is certainly much shorter than that which must be covered on the Antarctic snow-fields, but if the winds are favourable great help may be expected by using sails on the sledges, or by constructing special snow-boats, such as I have suggested in my book on Greenland (p. 38).

The Arctic regions are, on the other hand, on all sides surrounded by extensive land masses, whilst the neighbourhood of the pole itself is covered by water. For this reason sailors have entertained the most fantastic ideas about an open polar sea, by which a short passage might even be found to the riches of China and India. They have tried to reach the pole from all sides, but everywhere their hopes have been wrecked on the floe-ice, and the polar sea has been the grave of many a sailor's dreams of fame and wealth

I will here shortly mention the routes by which the principal attempts have been made.

Smith Sound was for some time thought to be the 'high road' to the Pole, and some American travellers by this route have somewhat rashly pretended to have seen the open polar sea stretching away to the north. All expeditions were, however, effectually stopped by floe-ice, carried down by a current from the north. Travelling over this ice was uncertain and difficult work; but the most northerly point yet reached has been in this region, Markham, of the Nares expedition, having penetrated to latitude $83^{\circ} 20' \text{ N.}$ (1876), and Lockwood, of the Greely expedition, to latitude $83^{\circ} 24' \text{ N.}$ (1882).

Along the east coast of Greenland attempts towards the Pole have been made, especially by the so-called second German North Pole Expedition (1869-70). They were soon stopped by floe-ice swept southwards on the polar current, and did not reach very high latitudes (c. 77° N.).

North of Spitzbergen Sir Edward Parry made a most effective attempt in 1827. When his vessel was stopped he left it, and tried to advance over the floe-ice, dragging boats and sledges with him. He reached latitude $82^{\circ} 45' \text{ N.}$, where he was, however, obliged to return, as the ice was drifting so rapidly southwards that he could make no headway against it. In spite of the steamships of our time nobody has reached Parry's latitude in this direction, but no serious attempt has been made since then.

In the direction of Franz Joseph's Land several attempts have been made, but they have met with the same hindrance, viz. the polar ice. The last attempt on that side was made by the Dane, Captain Hovgaard, on board the *Dijmphna*. His idea was, that from Cape Tsheljuskin it would be possible to penetrate towards the Pole along the east coast of Franz Joseph's Land. He was, however, stopped by ice in the Kara Sea.

On the side of Bering Strait a few attempts only have been made. The first was Cook's expedition in 1776, and the last that of the *Jeanette* in 1879-81. Here, also, the same difficulty, the floe-ice, was met with, and in lower latitudes than anywhere else. The *Jeanette* was caught in the ice near latitude 71° N. , and south-east of Wrangel Island.

In 1868 a French geographer, M. Lambert, tried to raise the money for a North Pole expedition by a public subscription in France. His plan was to go through Bering Strait, and to penetrate towards the Pole along a route very like that along which

the *Jeanette* afterwards drifted. He had that strange idea of his time that behind the outer ice-bar one would find an open polar sea through which it was easy to reach the Pole, and return even in some few weeks. Lambert died in the war against Germany (1870), and his project died with him. Its value was in a very sad way tested by the *Jeanette* expedition.

The conclusion one must draw from all these unsuccessful attempts may seem rather discouraging. The impossibility of reaching the Pole in open water must be considered as very nearly proved, and the prospect of a successful progress by dragging boats and sledges over the broken and difficult floe-ice, which is kept in constant motion by currents and winds, is not more hopeful. The chances would be favourable enough if any land could be discovered reaching to the Pole. The difficulty of reaching it would not then be much greater than that of crossing Greenland. But we know of no country which is likely to have such an extension to the North. Greenland seems to end not very far north of the latitude already reached, and Franz Joseph's Land seems to be only a group of islands.

There have been a great many more or less wild projects for reaching the North Pole through the air by balloon or balloon-ships. We have not yet, however, got such command of these capricious means of transport as would lead to any safe results, and to entrust oneself wholly to the wind, as long as we have no certain knowledge of the wind-currents in these regions, would, to put it mildly, be somewhat hazardous. On the other hand, we are not entitled to deny that the Pole may some day be reached by balloon, but the observations made on such a short and airy visit must necessarily be somewhat incomplete. How, then, can the North Pole be reached?

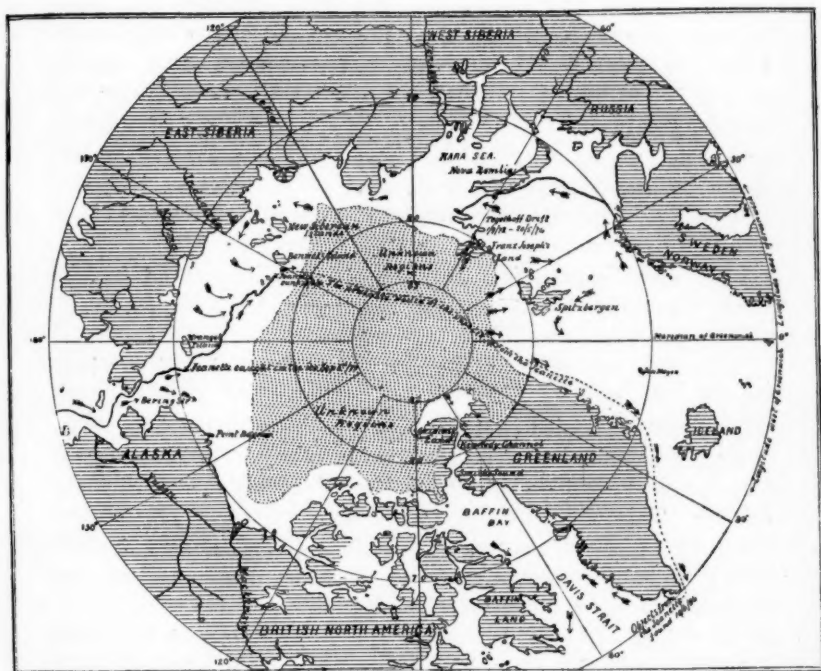
I believe that if we take careful notice of the forces which nature itself places at our disposal, and endeavour to work with them, and not against them, we shall find, if not the shortest, at all events the most certain, route. We have already seen how little use it is to work against the currents coming from the Polar regions; but when currents run from these regions it seems natural that somewhere currents must also run towards them.

During two years the *Jeanette* was enclosed in the ice, and drifted during that time from Wrangel Island to a place¹ north of the New Siberian Islands, where she sank (June 13, 1881). Three years later (June 18, 1884), several objects belonging to

¹ Latitude 77° 15' N., and longitude 151° 59' E.

her were found on the floe-ice near Julianehaab, on the southwest coast of Greenland. Amongst these objects were the following:—

- (1) A list of provisions, with the signature of De Long, the leader of the *Jeanette* expedition, written in his own handwriting.
- (2) A written list of the boats of the *Jeanette*.
- (3) A pair of trousers made of oiled linen, marked Louis Noros, which is the name of one of the men saved from the *Jeanette*.



—→ The Arrows indicate the direction of the Currents.

As all the floe-ice of Western Greenland comes from its east coast and round Cape Farewell, there can be no doubt that the floe, which carried these objects from the *Jeanette*, came that way. The question, therefore, arises by which route did it travel all the way from the New Siberian Islands to the east coast of Greenland. It must have been either south of Franz Joseph's Land and Spitzbergen, or north of these islands.

In the former case, the floe must have passed between Franz Joseph's Land and Nova Zembla. There seems, however, to be no current through this strait with a distinct western direction, and in its southern part there is even a current running eastward. The Austrians on board the *Tegethoff* (1872-74) were drifting in this strait during one year and a half, and were only transported from the north coast of Nova Zembla to the south coast of Franz Joseph's Land, whilst the objects from the *Jeanette* drifted the whole distance from the New Siberian Islands to Julianehaab in three years. Having passed south of Franz Joseph's Land, the floe could not come through the strait between it and Spitzbergen, as the current there runs southwards, so that it would necessarily be forced south of the latter; even if it had passed its south point, it must have met with the Spitzbergen branch of the Gulf Stream, and been floated along northwards until it might at last have met the polar current and swept southwards along the east coast of Greenland. This is a very long way, and it is most improbable that the floe should have travelled so far during so short a time as three years.

We must, consequently, assume that the floe found its way across somewhere to the north of Franz Joseph's Land, *i.e.* in the neighbourhood of the Pole.

The distance the floe must have passed from the place where the *Jeanette* sank to Julianehaab is about 2,900 nautical miles, and the time occupied is 1,100 days. It drifted, therefore, at an average speed of 2.6 nautical miles every twenty-four hours. This corresponds very closely with the speed at which the *Jeanette* drifted. This was about two nautical miles every twenty-four hours during the latter part of her drift (from January to June 1881), while the average speed of the whole drift was about one nautical mile every twenty-four hours.

The drift of the objects from the *Jeanette* furnishes us with the only certain dates by which we can make any calculations of the speed of the current running across the Pole, or near it, but there is other evidence on which we can base our belief in the existence of such a current.

Several years ago a most remarkable piece of wood was found on the west coast of Greenland, near Goothaab, and was afterwards given by Dr. Rink to the ethnological museum of Christiania. This was a 'throwing-stick' of a peculiar shape, which is not used anywhere in Greenland. Upon closer examination it appears that the only place where throwing-sticks of a similar

shape occur is in Alaska, in the region of Port Clarence, Norton Sound, and the mouth of the Yukon river. The throwing-stick found is, moreover, ornamented with Chinese glass beads of that kind which the Alaska Eskimo buy from the Tshuktsches, on the Asiatic side of the Bering Strait. Thus it can have no other home than the west coast of Alaska, and it can only have reached Greenland in the same way as the objects from the *Jeanette*, i.e. it must have been floated along by a current from the Bering Strait across the polar region north of Franz Joseph's Land, and to the east coast of Greenland, along this coast round Cape Farewell, and northwards along the west coast.

A third proof that a current must be constantly running from the sea north of Bering Strait and the Siberian coast is the considerable amount of Siberian, and to a small extent perhaps also American, drift-wood which every year reaches the coasts of Greenland. I have had the opportunity of examining a great deal of this wood on the west coast of Greenland as well as on its east coast. I have also found it floating in the sea amongst the floe-ice. Its appearance generally indicates that it has not been in the water for a very long time, or, at all events, not without having been enclosed in the ice. On one piece found in the Denmark Strait, the strokes of the axe which had cut the tree in its distant home were quite visible and distinct, as if they had been made a few days before. Similarly, Siberian drift-wood is found to the north of Spitzbergen, amongst the floe-ice carried southwards by that current against which Parry fought in vain. This seems to be a good proof that the wood must be drifted across from Siberia, passing somewhere near the Pole.

It is also interesting in this connection to note that a German botanist, Professor Grisebach, believes that he has found several Siberian plants in the flora of the north-east coast of Greenland. If this is true it is probable that the seeds of these plants have been brought to Greenland by the current across the Pole.

From all these facts we may seem, then, fully entitled to draw the conclusion that a constant current is running across the polar region, somewhere between Franz Joseph's Land and the Pole, from the Siberian Sea and the Bering Strait, and towards the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland.

But even without these facts, we may in another way arrive at the same conclusion.

Considering what an immense quantity of water is carried along

by the broad polar current, streaming southwards with a depth of from 2,000 to 2,500 fathoms between Spitzbergen and Greenland from the unknown polar regions, we can conclude with certainty that all this water is not taken from a small and limited basin, but must be gathered from a considerable area. This is the more certain because the polar sea is unusually shallow, as far as we have measured it north of Europe, Asia, and America. The polar current certainly receives, north-west of Spitzbergen, a branch from the Gulf Stream, but this is too inconsiderable to be of much importance in this connection. The principal part of the polar current comes from the north; and it must affect the whole polar basin as an immense pump, sucking the water even from the shores of Siberia and the Bering Strait.

The water it sucks is, to some extent, certainly restored by that eastern branch of the Gulf Stream which passes eastward north of Norway, and enters the polar basin north of Nova Zembla.

Another current enters the polar basin by the Bering Strait. This is so rapid that it sometimes, especially in the spring, runs northward with a speed of four knots an hour.

The most important addition of water which the polar basin receives is undoubtedly from the European, American, and especially Siberian rivers running into it. The drainage area of all these rivers is very considerable, embracing as it does much of the northern part of Europe, nearly the whole of Northern Asia or Siberia, down to the Altai mountains and Baikal, besides the principal part of Alaska and English North America. This is no inconsiderable part of the earth's surface, and the moisture falling every year over so wide an area must form no inconsiderable addition to so limited and shallow a basin as the polar sea. It is not very probable that this sea itself should be able to add much to the moisture falling, as it is mostly covered by ice, and where open water exists the very low temperature in those regions prevents much evaporation. The moisture of the air over the drainage district of the polar sea must consequently mainly originate in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans.

The moisture falling over the polar sea itself must certainly also to some extent have a similar origin, as warm and moist air is attracted from lower latitudes by the low pressure of the air over the polar regions.

From the fact that the water of the polar current between Spitzbergen and Greenland contains a comparatively small amount

of salt, we can also directly conclude that the polar basin must receive a considerable addition of fresh water. It may perhaps be objected that the freezing and melting of the ice would have the same effect. This objection might have some force if it were only the water at the surface which is deficient in salt while the water beneath is well supplied. This, however, is not the case, as the water in the polar sea contains but little salt at all depths.

As therefore the polar basin is constantly receiving a large inflow of water, and as little evaporation takes place, it is obvious that there must be some corresponding outflow. The most natural outlet must necessarily be the broad and deep opening between Spitzbergen and Greenland. A little water escapes also through Smith Sound, Jones Sound, and Lancaster Sound of the Arctic Archipelago of North America, but as these sounds are very narrow and shallow, their currents cannot carry off a very large body of water.

The conditions of the winds and the air-pressure over the polar sea seem also, as far as we know them, to favour such a current as that indicated. A belt of low pressure extends from the Atlantic Sea along the south side of Spitzbergen and Franz Joseph's Land and into the Siberian polar sea. According to well-known meteorological laws, the principal direction of the winds on the south side of this belt of low pressure must be from west towards east, and this will cause a similar current in the sea along the north coast of Siberia. The actual existence of such a current was in fact observed by the Swedish Vega Expedition. The winds on the north side of this low-pressure area must, however, principally blow in a direction from east to west, and will consequently cause a water current across the pole towards the Greenland sea.

It may thus be seen that, from whatever side we consider the question, we come to the same conclusion, that there must exist a polar current with a course such as we have already mentioned.

But, having such a current, the most natural way of reaching the Pole must be to go into this current on that side where it runs northwards, and let it carry one straight across those regions which it has prevented so many from reaching.

My plan, then, is briefly this: I shall build a wooden ship as small and as strong as possible; it shall be just big enough to carry coal and provisions for twelve men for five years; a vessel of about 170-200 tons will probably suffice. It shall have an engine strong enough to give a speed of six knots, and besides it shall have full rig for sailing.

The most important feature of the ship will be that she shall be built on such lines as will give her the greatest power of resistance to the pressure of the floe-ice. Her sides must not be perpendicular, but must slope from the bulwarks to the keel, so that the floes shall get no hold of her when they are pressed together, but will glide downwards along her sides and thus tend to lift her out of the water. The sides of the *Jeanette* were straight up and down, and this was the shape of most ships which have been used for Arctic exploration, in spite of which defect they have stood the pressure of the ice pretty well. As the *Jeanette* managed to withstand the ice-pressure for nearly two years, it will readily be understood that a very slight alteration of shape will give us a very strong ship, and one which can scarcely be crushed by the ice if it is properly handled. For the same reason the vessel ought to be as small as possible, as the lighter she is the more easily she will be lifted by the ice, and the less pressure there will be on her sides. A small ship has also other advantages, as it is more convenient to navigate in the ice, and it is easier to find good and safe places for it between the floes.

Such a ship must naturally be built of excellent oak all through. We can hardly expect her to be a first-rate boat in a heavy sea, but that is not of much importance in the Arctic regions, where the ice makes the water quiet, and if we are shaken about a little on the way out this will probably entail no more severe results than some sacrifices to the gods of the deep. With such a vessel, and a crew of ten or twelve strong and well-picked men, besides an equipment for five years as good in all respects as modern appliances can afford, I think the enterprise has a good prospect of success.

It is my intention in the summer of 1892 to go through Bering Strait and along the north Siberian coast towards the New Siberian Islands. From the experience of the American whalers it appears generally possible to pass Bering Strait in June.

When we have arrived at the New Siberian Islands we shall have to wait for the right moment when we can reach the farthest point north in open water. I think this will probably be in August or the beginning of September. To be able to get a better view over the surroundings, and to examine in what direction there is open water, &c., I think of using a captive balloon from the ship.

At the most favourable moment we must push northwards along

the coasts of the islands as far as we can, and in this way I hope to reach at all events the Bennett Island, from which the members of the *Jeanette* expedition went southwards in their boats. When we can get no further we shall have nothing left but to run into the ice at the most favourable spot. We shall then be in the current which the *Jeanette* struck, and like her shall be carried north. The ice will, perhaps, soon begin to press, but it will only lift our strong ship, and this will give us good quarters on the ice. Probably we shall in this way be carried across the Pole, or very near it, and into the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland. If it is summer when we arrive there, we may be able to get free into open water near latitude 80° N.; but if it is winter we shall perhaps drift southwards along the east coast of Greenland, and then come out somewhere the following summer.

If the ship, in spite of all precautions, should be crushed in the ice, the expedition will still have another resource. The current will still bear us homeward across the polar region towards Spitzbergen or Greenland, and the only alteration in our fate will be, that we shall have to live on an ice-floe instead of in our cabins on board ship. For this purpose we shall take good and warm tents, made of a double layer of canvas, or a similar stuff, and well filled with reindeer-hair in between. Such tents would be very warm, and at the same time very light. That there is no great risk in leaving the ship and taking refuge on the drifting floe-ice, we have to some extent experienced during our Greenland expedition. Other expeditions have also drifted in a similar way considerable distances without any accident, as, for example, the *Hansa* crew, which drifted along the east coast of Greenland from about latitude 74° N. to Cape Farewell; and also the men from the American *Polaris* expedition, who drifted on an ice-floe from Smith's Sound far south into the Davis Strait. Drifting on the floes will be less dangerous in the polar seas, as the waters are there quiet, and there is no surf, which in other regions may be rather disagreeable, judging from our experience in the drift-ice on the east coast of Greenland. For success in such a voyage across the Pole two things only are necessary, viz. good clothes and plenty of food, and these can without much difficulty be procured. When we emerge into open water on this side of the Pole, either near Spitzbergen or near Greenland, there will not be much difficulty in returning home in our open boats.

There is of course a chance that we may be stopped by unknown lands near the Pole, or that we may strike an eddy or a side current.

In the former case, however, we should greet such a land with joy, as it could not fail to yield scientific results of great importance, and if we failed to get our ship afloat again we should have to leave her, and, with our boats and necessary equipment, strike out for the nearest current to drift on again. In the latter case a side current must bring us somewhere. It cannot for ever run in a ring near the Pole. It may be possible that the current will not carry us exactly across the Pole, but it will, probably, not be very far off, and I do not see the importance of reaching that mathematical point in which the axis of our globe has its northern termination. The principal thing is to get the unknown polar regions explored.

How long a time can such a drift in the ice from the New Siberian Islands to the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland be expected to take? We have already seen that the objects from the *Jeanette* drifted in three years a much longer distance to the west coast of Greenland. If we assume that they required one year for the drift southwards from latitude 80° N. on the east coast of Greenland, only two years remain for the rest of the journey, and this gives a speed of no more than two nautical miles every twenty-four hours. This does not seem too high a rate when we remember that the last days before she sank the *Jeanette* drifted at a much higher speed, which sometimes even reached eight nautical miles every twenty-four hours. It cannot, therefore, be considered as an improbability that we should reach open water on this side of the Pole within two years after our start from the Siberian side; and if we take provisions for five years we may consider that we have an ample margin.

It will be no holiday trip, this drift through regions where the days last six months and the nights are no shorter. There will be many difficulties on the way, and perhaps suffering, from the darkness, cold, and scurvy; but I trust that we shall be able to cope with these troubles, and when our expedition has once begun there will be no help in looking backwards. Our hope will then lie on the other side of the Pole, and this knowledge will help us forward.

FRIDTJOF NANSEN,

Under a Colonnade.

IT was a day early in March. The dull grey sky and bitter east wind gave no foretaste of spring. Here in London, round every corner swept the pitiless icy blast. Beggars and crossing-sweepers gathered their rags more closely about them, while rich men, clad in heavy overcoats, cursed the climate and sought shelter in the well-warmed rooms of their clubs. Only those constrained by duty or poverty were abroad in the streets on such a day as this. Amongst this number were the sandwich-men, who paraded the streets with their customary slow and spiritless demeanour, with hang-dog looks and shuffling feet. One after the other the procession of these silent depressed figures passed up or down the busiest thoroughfares. So many hours to keep going, so many weary steps to pace, for the munificent pay of eighteenpence a day. Day after day to carry about the tale of other people's pleasures, with their own woe and degradation eating like iron into their souls.

Truly, they earned enough to keep body and soul together; but in many of these cases it were better for the end to come quickly—better, aye, that they had never been born. Under the colonnade in Carlton Street, a short-cut from Regent Street to the Haymarket, is a favourite resort of sandwich-men for the midday rest. In this unfrequented little street they gather together silently, and for a short space the oppressive boards are laid aside, and they sit or stand in comparative ease.

To-day many of them have found a warmer shelter within doors, but two, more wretched and ragged than the rest, are seated on the kerbstone.

They have removed their posters, which incline against the pillars. One placard is the advertising medium of a cheap restaurant, and upon it is printed in large and attractive capitals, 'Do you want a good dinner? Go to Johnson's, 600 Strand.' Upon the other poster, 'Broken Down. Farcical Comedy, Star Theatre,' seems a sarcastic comment on its bearer. There is little traffic in this side-street, beyond the occasional footsteps of a

passenger hurrying through on some errand. There are no shops to attract idlers, and only dreary bedchambers on the upper stories overlook the quiet street.

The men who sat patiently side by side on the kerbstone did not appear to be acquainted. Chance had apparently brought them together, as near neighbours for the first time. Yet they were beyond curiosity, it seemed, as companions in misfortune mostly are, for neither looked at the other.

The older and more ragged man of the two was very thin and starved-looking. His hollow eyes looked out of a shrunken face, which, but for the unkempt beard, would have appeared like a piece of parchment stretched over a skull. He shivered from time to time so violently that his teeth chattered audibly.

'It's a cold day, mate. These infernal winds creep round every corner,' he said at last, as if in excuse of a mortal weakness. The other man was Irish, and his speech betrayed him as well as twinkling eyes, in which a ghost of merriment yet lived.

'I believe ye, me bhoy! Ye need to be lined well inside and out not to feel of 'em.' He pointed to the poster he had laid aside, and laughed at his own joke. 'Don't *we* oughter go to Johnson's?'

But the other one apparently was beyond any perception of irony, for he only rose stiffly, saying—

'I'll have on my sandwich again. It will keep the draughts out, anyhow.' He pointed to the holes in his tattered coat before he replaced his boards, and remained standing. While he was engaged adjusting his boards his companion looked him up and down for the first time.

'Ye've seen better days, I'll go bail. Ye weren't always a sandwich.'

The gaunt one answered sharply, 'No.'

The red-haired Irishman grinned again. 'Well, it ain't many as begins young in this line.'

The older man shifted his boards to a more comfortable angle. 'Not a profession that demands any particular ability or honesty, is it? We aren't likely to run away with these. It's about the last trade a man takes to before he turns his face to the wall.'

'Better half a loaf than no bread, say I,' responded the other.

'You won't kick at the bridge that carries you over,' jeered the man who spoke like a gentleman.

The Irishman had taken out of his pocket a little roll of paper

which he opened carefully, as if very precious, shielding its contents from the rough wind.

'Have some baccy?' he said to his comrade, as though to conciliate him. The man of educated voice and speech bent to look at the substance.

'Why, it's cigar ends!' he said in surprise.

'For sure!' and a hoarse laugh sounded down the silent street. 'Don't ye go for to say ye think as the likes of me buys Turkish tobacco by the pound. I chews of these, and I smokes of thim, and they does me a power of good.' While he spoke he went on cutting the ends with a well-worn pocket-knife. 'Where do I get 'em, ye wonders? Ye are a green one. Why, I collects of thim bits outside the clubs. Sometimes thim young swells will chuck half a cigar right away—prime sort. That's rare luck for me.' Then, having completed the cutting, a dirty little pipe appeared from some receptacle in the collection of rags he called a coat, and presently he began to smoke. The man leaning against the colonnade watched him silently for a space.

'You've been a soldier,' he said at last.

The dirty little pipe was removed from the Irishman's mouth, and with a look of surprise he turned on his companion.

'For sure, me bhoy! But ye don't niver say ye see any drill left in me?' For a moment he straightened himself and made a pantomimic gesture of saluting.

'Were you ever in active service?'

With an animated gesture the old soldier swore a big oath, saying, 'I've sent a few niggers to kingdom come.' Then, with a more dejected air, 'But it's twenty years sinst I left the rigiment: it was soon after the New Zealand war.'

The gentleman in rags looked more closely at him, saying quickly, 'The New Zealand war—you were there?'

'Troth and I was. See my game leg.' Here the man extended it, stroking it compassionately. 'I've got a bullet in me yet from one of thim cursed Maoris. I was in the 120th Foot, C Company, the smartest lot in the rigiment.'

The gentleman carrying the boards started. 'Captain Dasborough commanded you,' he said slowly, and his eyes had a haunted look.

'By the powers, he was the gintleman! Did ye know of him?'

A low and hollow laugh shook the boards.

'Yes, I knew him. He has been my most intimate friend all his life.'

The old soldier shook his head as if in doubt.

‘Thin ye knew him for a divil-may-care young blade. I was his servant.’

The gentleman’s boards shook again, but there was no more laughter beneath them.

‘You—you were his servant?’ And the hollow eyes searched the other man’s face with an effort at recollection.

‘For sure I was. But I’ve lost sight of the rigiment now, and there ain’t no one in it as u’d remimber me. When a man gets into throuble sorra a one remimbers him.’

At this moment a lady appeared at the end of the short street. She was young and graceful, and had a quick light step. She came along the pavement straight towards the sandwich-men, smiling all the time. She was neatly though poorly dressed. The old soldier, hearing a footstep, stretched his head to look round the protection of his pillar. He rose to his feet as quickly as he could on recognising the lady.

‘Bless the saints, she’s come agen!’

‘Who is she?’ said the other man indifferently.

‘She’s a angel of light to some of us poor divils. Many a sixpence she has dropped into me hand at this very corner, and many a koind word, worth more than gold, she has spoke. None of us ain’t too shabby or too poor for her to take notice of.’

The girl was quite near them now, and advanced with a look of bright happiness upon her face.

‘Good morning, Tom. So you’re at work again. I have missed you on your usual beat lately. Have you been ill?’

‘An faith, Miss, it’s the old wound in me leg that’s broke out agen.’ Here he shook himself as if impatient of human weakness. ‘But there’s a kick left in the old horse, and I’ll die in harness if I can.’

The girl sighed, and for a moment her eyes rested on the silent figure leaning against the pillar. ‘How brave you are, Tom! You know I am poor too and cannot help you. But have you no friends, no children, who could take care of you now you are growing old?’

The man called Tom stroked his ragged beard, and the twinkle died out of his eyes. ‘I had a little daughter wonst’—he paused and looked at her as though measuring her height—‘about your age it might be now’; a longer pause, in which a convulsive twitch passed over his face. ‘Faith, she had pretty blue eyes like ye, too.’

The girl spoke softly. 'And is she dead?'

'It may be. If she lives, may the blessed Virgin protect her—me little darlint!'

The gentleman with the boards drew his cap over his eyes. His attitude implied complete indifference to what was going on near him.

'This is the last time I may see you, Tom. I came this way to-day hoping to find you, so as to tell you I am going away to another country very soon. Perhaps you will miss me.' A wistful glance was directed towards the worthless sot, the broken-down soldier who had seen 'trouble,' and whom no man on God's wide earth regarded with friendly or compassionate looks.

'Bad news it is. Thin I shall never see your sweet face agen?'

'I shall not need to teach any more, or to be a governess.' She paused, blushing a little. 'I am going to have a home of my own—to be married.'

'Ye'll bring a power of happiness into some man's home.' The ready Irish wit never failed.

'I hope I may,' said the girl betwixt smiles and tears. 'And when I am far away I shall often think of you and others'—here she glanced timidly towards the stranger—'I could do so little for. You know I have been so sorry for you all.'

'But, for sure, ye've done a sight o' kindness to me.'

The girl's attention seemed somehow attracted towards the silent figure leaning against the pillar, though the man gave no sign that he heard her words.

'This,' she pointed to the other man, 'is perhaps a friend of yours, Tom? I have noticed him here before.'

Then the inanimate form gave evidence of life. The gentleman in rags removed his cap, and the wild March wind caught the wisps of gray hair that hung dishevelled about his neck. He was a sorry spectacle.

'We are all friends in misfortune, madam. It is Dives who has none,' he said in answer to her speech to Kelly.

The girl turned eyes full of surprised inquiry upon him.

'You—you do not speak like'—here she hesitated—'You—must have been——'

'A gentleman,' interposed Tom.

With the faint flicker of a smile the gentleman replaced his cap.

'I have been,' he said laconically.

No one liked to break the silence after that. It was vain to

offer pity. The calamity of fallen fortunes and estate was beyond all remedy now. Soon the lady addressed Tom once more.

‘I have no money to spare to-day—nothing at all to give you. I have hardly enough to live on myself—till—till I am married.’ She hesitated a good deal, and her eyes were cast down in pitiful embarrassment. Her poor old *protégés* would go uncomforted by her little kindnesses now and in the future. With a sudden child-like impulse she detached a bunch of violets from her gown and held them out.

‘These flowers are very sweet—perhaps you don’t care for violets, Tom—but you see I have nothing else.’

It was hardly the kind of gift to be welcomed by a man of his class, but the poetry of life was not quite dead in this poor sinner. Tom even bent his shock-head a moment over the hand extended to him.

‘Thank ye, kindly, me pretty lady, and may thim blessed saints presarve ye whereivver ye may be. I do not even know a name to ye.’

‘My name is Kate,’ she said simply.

‘Sure and it was me mother’s name—me child’s name too.’

‘Now I must be going. Someone will be waiting for me.’ The girl touched the soiled and hardened hand with her own soft one.

‘God bless ye, Kate!’ said the poor sandwich-man, with his eyes following her departing steps.

‘Good-bye!’ said Kate, softly, looking over her shoulder and waving her hand as she retreated.

The sleet had now begun to fall—a sharp shower, which was driven in gusts under the colonnade. The older sandwich-man was at last constrained to retire from the support of the pillar. He looked at the soldier with a curious gaze as he drew near to him.

‘Your name is Thomas Kelly,’ he said suddenly. An angry gleam passed over the old soldier’s face.

‘Whist, man! don’t ye cry it so loud!’

‘You are greatly changed. I should not have known you if you had not named your regiment.’

Then the soldier turned with a fierce oath on his superior. There are no superiors in sandwich life.

‘Who, in the devil’s name, may ye be?’

The wicked parchment-face looked steadily down on the poor wretch recalled to recollection of his past.

'You were a man in my company. I made you my servant, and you were convicted of stealing the mess-moneys from my charge.'

In trembling tones Kelly made answer. 'I do not know ye.'

The other man laid a hand on his shoulder, saying, 'Am I right? Was this charge brought against you?'

Kelly, staggering back a little, leaned against the wall. A passing baker-boy looked curiously at this ill-assorted pair, who appeared to be holding a strange argument.

'Right ye are,' said the old soldier faintly, 'but I do not know ye, ye limb of Satan!'

The man smiled with a curious sort of satisfaction.

'Am I, then, so utterly changed?'

Something in his tone must have recalled the past to Kelly's clouded memory, for he crept nearer along the wall till he could peer closely in his companion's face.

'My God! Don't ye never say it! Ye are—ye were——'

The superior officer pushed back his cap, and in the private's eyes there dawned a slow recognition.

'I was Robert Dasborough—your captain years ago.'

Kelly fell back quickly. 'A sandwich! Sure such a dirty blackguard was nivver Captain Dasborough—the loife of the regiment—a real swell—come to this!'

The man gave back a mocking echo.

'Yes—come to this.'

'A filthy sandwich crawling the streets like a tortoise for nine bob a week! There is no likeness. Ye lie!'

Again the gentlemen spoke in the calm tones that are always most convincing.

'Shall I prove it to you?'

'I will not believe ye,' said Kelly vehemently.

The baker-boy came back from his errand down the street, and paused to look at the old chaps, who appeared still to be quarrelling. But as they did not come to blows the matter did not promise to be interesting, and he passed on whistling.

'Listen, Tom Kelly.' Here, as if to emphasise his speech, the gentleman touched his companion's arm. 'When you knew me last I was a young man still—a plucky, reckless soldier, fond of wine and cards.'

'For sure he loved his glass, the Captain did, and would pick up his cards and run his horses with the best of men.'

Without regarding the interruption, the ex-captain went on.

'I threw away a decent fortune with the carelessness of a gambler.'

'Right ye are! The Captain chucked about his gold like farthings.'

The voice went on without ceasing.

'You, my servant, were charged by me with stealing some missing moneys, *to which you and I alone had access*. You see, my man, I know all the details of your miserable story. The theft was brought home to you by circumstantial evidence, and you were convicted.'

The wretched sinner listened to the history of his life with wild eyes and bloodless lips.

'And that sentence sent me down hill a bit. It ain't easy to live alongside rogues and villains in a gaol for years without gettin' a taste for their sort o' tricks.'

The gentleman with the tattered cap smiled with a sort of contempt.

'You still declare you went to prison an innocent man, then?'

'Ay, before Almighty God, I did; but I came out minded to be guilty. I have served more than one sentence since.' There was something in this wretched creature's attitude which seemed to demand belief.

'And you served your full sentence for some other man's guilt?' said the other, turning his face from the man he tortured.

'For sure I did, and my curse lie on him wherever he may be. Think of it, sir,—the old habit of respectful address broke out—'to let a man rot in gaol; to take me away from me wife and child, and to shut me up for long years with thim divils.' There was a long pause, and in the silence the wind whistled and the traffic of the streets made a muffled roar. At last Kelly turned a puzzled look on the man who stood beside him.

'Me Captain was a fine upstanding chap, with a bold face and a laughing eye, and ye—ye are—'

Then came a fierce rejoinder.

'While I am a hang-dog wretch, a cringing shrivelled sot, with no soul, and very little body left. Yet I swear I am the man I claim to be.'

'It can't be true,' said Kelly, still staring at him in a fixed way.

'Kelly, my man, do you remember a wounded officer left in your charge in the forest of Waikaro, and that you were attacked

by five natives, and defended your captain single-handed, at the risk of your own life. Oh, you were a brave man, Tom Kelly, let me tell you.' The tattered gentleman stooped and patted the hero of his story on the back.

'No one remembers that tale,' the hero muttered.

'You deserved the Victoria Cross, but you did not get it. See, do you remember this wound?' The officer bared one arm of rags and showed the mark of a deep cut, either of spear or knife.

'By the blessed saints, then, ye are me captain! but sure ye've got a new face. Will ye shake hands, sir? We're not so far apart now.'

'No,' came the answer, with fierce decision, from the man of birth. For a second's space they looked into each other's face, and then it was worthy of notice that the officer dropped his eyes. 'Remember,' he said slowly, 'I gave evidence against you at your trial.'

'But sure, sir, I've forgiven ye that thrifle. The look of the thing was against me, and 'tis all so long ago.' He smiled in a dreary way.

Kelly had begun to think his companion was a bit cranky. The short, sharp replies, the unreasoning laughter, and the contempt of his own beggary and wretchedness convinced him that his old officer was somewhat distraught. It was no uncommon experience to meet with half-witted sandwich-men, harmless enough, and capable of carrying boards as directed, but withal with some important screw loose.

While Kelly sat reflecting on the strange meeting, half doubting that life still held anything surprising for him, another passenger drew near unobserved. The newcomer was a young man with quick, firm tread and a strong, resolute face.

'Good-day, my men. Not got a crust between you, this dinner-time? Have either of you seen a young lady pass this way? She is tall and slight, and she wears a grey dress.'

Kelly indicated St. Alban's Place with a grimy forefinger. For down this passage the girl had gone. 'Thank you, my man. Here's a shilling apiece.' His rapid glance searched the face of the man who had not spoken, and apparently its dissolute and gaunt appearance was clear to him. 'Go and have a dinner somewhere. Now, don't drink all of it.'

'Thank ye koindly, sir,' said Kelly effusively, ducking his shock-head repeatedly; and after he had watched the passenger

disappear he hobbled off in the opposite direction, to some familiar drinking-bar.

The young man did not, however, go far round the corner, and his step gradually slackened as he proceeded. He said to himself that it was more than hopeless to attempt to assist old reprobates of that class. And then, stirred by the sudden recollection of a woman's tender pity for such friendless waifs and strays, he retraced his steps. He would see what he could do. One of the men was under a small obligation to him already, and he had recognised him at a glance.

And this man was now solitary beneath the colonnade, occupied in tossing the coin so lately bestowed upon him. Evidently the ruling passion was still strong, for he pursued his game of chance with so much attention that he did not hear any approach. When the donor touched him on the shoulder he turned his gaunt face sharply, like a dog about to snap. 'Have you come to ask for your money back?' jeered the fallen gentleman.

The answer was conciliatory and calm.

'I've seen you before, my man.'

'I dare say.' Again the coin was spun in the air.

'In a hospital, six months back. Your hand was injured in some low gambling brawl, and I dressed it for you.'

'Right you are,' said the Captain.

Without any encouragement, his new friend was persistent.

'And I offered to get you work when you left the hospital.' The young doctor appeared to be reminding him of past favours, so the gentleman shook himself free of patronage with an angry expletive.

'I want no help to live, though I have not the pluck to put an end to the fight myself.'

For a moment the young man seemed to reflect. Here was a nature almost impossible to deal with; yet he would try once more.

'Was it misfortune, or—or——' He paused, and the sandwich-man took up the question with a mocking laugh.

'Or crime, young sir, you mean. Don't beg the question. I'm not squeamish nowadays. It was crime.' There was a deadly emphasis of certainty in his words.

'But there may be people belonging to you who could—who would——'

'For God's sake, do not teach anyone to find me. I am lost, lost——'

Yet the young man persevered.

'I leave England next week as surgeon to a colonial hospital. I shall have no further chance of doing you a good turn.'

The man in rags answered vehemently:

'No need to look for me if you ever come back. I shall soon go under—under. A few steps more, a stumble again, and then the great darkness—death. Hurrah for Death! for he's a jolly good fellow.' Again he tossed the coin.

The young doctor turned away with a curt 'Good-morning,' while the sandwich-man continued practising the tossing of his coin, crying 'Heads or tails?' But, after all, this might have been a feint of indifference, for he ceased his play when his friendly adviser was out of sight. Looking after the young man to see if he was out of sight or still under observation, his eye fell upon a dark object lying on the pavement—a pocket-book, surely, or something similar. Advancing quickly, he pounced upon it like an animal.

'This must be his; there will be money in it,' he muttered. Then, looking round stealthily, he clutched it closer and retreated once more to the shelter of the colonnade. He appeared about to open the new-found treasure when a policeman on his beat passed round the corner on the opposite side of the street. The policeman, with merely a cursory glance bestowed on a sandwich-man in the customary resort of his kind, passed out of sight. Then once more the pocket-book came to light, and was opened with trembling fingers. The man smiled sardonically, murmuring to himself:

'I am going to rob him, because he has been kind to me. That's the way of it.'

Then he began to count the notes rapidly. 'Five, ten, fifteen, twenty. He calls himself a poor man, and he can lose twenty pounds!' He looked at the money, he hugged it, he even kissed it in a frenzy of joy. Then suddenly his hand fell to his side, and with a terror-stricken gaze he looked before him. He appeared as if overcome by a momentary fear or recollection. Perhaps he saw the ghost of his lost self. So he sat, fighting a silent battle, for a few seconds. Then, with a firm touch, he rolled up the notes and replaced them carefully in the pocket-book. Afterwards, shouldering the posters, he moved up the street in the direction taken by the young man, with the heavy, creeping gait of his kind. Kelly, having refreshed himself, came back to advise the other man to do likewise, but found him gone, and himself left to face the young doctor returning again in haste.

'Have you picked anything up, my man?' he called out anxiously when yet a few paces off.

'I'm always a-picking up what I can; cigar-ends and such-like,' rejoined Kelly.

'I have lost a valuable pocket-book, and I had it a few minutes before I turned down this street. Where is the other man?'

'Faith, and I'll swear he's gone to the nearest chap who'll stake his shilling on a horse.'

The young man knitted his brow anxiously.

'I may have left it in some of the shops where I called,' he said, and with rapid strides passed on.

Kelly, who was now temporarily warmed, if not fed, looked after him, with a grin, muttering:

'Thim young men does take things to heart. Now, as for me, it's only the weight of them blasted boards,' here he kicked venomously at the innocent posters resting against the wall, 'that aggrawates me. I owe 'em a grudge. Haven't they give me a hump on me shoulder through crawling about like a snail wi' a shell on me back.' And leaning against the wall himself, he took a blissful snooze of short duration.

It was the other sandwich-man who came back to rouse him. 'Quick march, my man. It's time to be on the move again.'

And Kelly, grumbling, roused himself and asked his companion to hoist the boards on his shoulders. He was inclined to be more quarrelsome with fate since he had spent his shilling.

'Thim boards is too much for me. I've done nought but carry posters that tells of good eating and drinking the last month.'

'The irony of fate, Kelly,' said the other man as he adjusted the strap. 'Well, it won't last much longer for either of us, I fancy.' Here he produced his shilling. 'Let's toss who'll get his discharge first.'

Kelly looked hard at the Captain, and shook his head. Here was an absolute proof of impaired intellect. 'Anything to plase ye, sir. It don't make much matter who sends in his papers first.' He decided it was better to humour the mood of his companion.

'Heads, death takes me: tails, you give me the go-by,' said the officer.

'Faith, 'tis a quare game,' muttered Kelly as he watched the coin spin.

'You call,' said the man who tossed.

'Heads!' said Kelly.

'Heads it is, by Jove!' said the superior. 'My turn first.' He laughed and hugged himself.

'Then, sure, as I've got to wait a bit longer till the ould hour-glass comes along, I'll be tramping on to me beat. Bless the Holy Virgin, I've had a good drink.'

And, chuckling to himself, with tottering gait he made his way back to Regent Street. The other man did not immediately follow, and it was not till steps were again heard on the pavement that he roused himself to realise the situation. Looking under the colonnade, he saw the young doctor approaching once more. This time he came accompanied by the girl who had passed up the street earlier. She leaned upon the young man's arm, and they had the appearance of lovers. So engrossed were they in their own conversation that they did not observe the sandwich-man half hidden by a pillar. The sleet was falling again in one of the sudden squalls that came on from time to time.

'You had better wait here a few moments, darling. It is a quiet corner, and the storm will be over presently.'

'There is no need for me to hurry to-day,' said the girl called Kate. 'I gave my last lesson to my pupils this morning. I can scarcely believe it all, Cecil.' She flashed a happy smile at him. The listening sandwich-man lifted his head.

'But, dearest, you must believe that I am going to carry you to the end of the world as my wife next week.' There was an eloquent silence, and the girl's cheek flushed. Then she said:

'It is like a wonderful fairy-tale to me. I can hardly believe my days of drudgery are at an end.' The young doctor caressed the little hand that rested so lightly on his arm.

'My appointment has come so unexpectedly that I do not wonder. But, my darling, are there no friends you would like to visit before we go?' The girl shook her head sadly.

'I have told you I am quite alone in the world; even the lady who took me from the workhouse and educated me is dead.'

The man sighed a little. 'Well, we both began life humbly. I in a charity-school, you in the workhouse, and we neither of us have much reason to bless our parents.' The man behind the pillar gathered every word that was spoken in his hand hollowed. 'I have often wondered if my father is still alive. Sometimes in the hospitals, when poor wretches have been brought in sick or injured, I have searched their faces and questioned them about their past.' The listener on the other side of the pillar made a sign of assent.

'Poor Cecil!' said Kate. 'And yet you knew your father had fallen very low?'

'Yes, I knew,' he said quietly; 'but there are sometimes strange meetings in the hospitals.'

'Oh!' said the girl, with tears springing to her eyes, 'your heart is better than mine. I have always been *afraid*—yes, afraid—lest my father should some day appear and stretch out a hand—a convict's hand, remember—and drag me down to misery and degradation.'

'My poor friendless Kate!' said the young man tenderly, 'there is no fear of that now; no one can claim you when you are my wife—Kate Dasborough.'

At the utterance of this name a ghastly pallor spread over the face of the listening sandwich-man. He gasped for breath as if choking, and leaned against the pillar for support.

'Yes, I shall soon be Kate Kelly no more,' she murmured, with a happy smile.

'That reminds me,' said her lover, 'that I have lost my pocket-book. I had intended to buy you a wedding-gift with part of its contents.' The girl released her hand from his arm quickly.

'Where did you lose it? You said you passed this way before. Let us look about. There is little traffic round this corner.' She glided under the colonnade round the pillar, and came face to face with a man crouched low. 'Why, here is a sandwich-man, fallen asleep!' The crouching creature lifted his head and stared at her in a wild way.

'You are Kate Kelly,' he muttered. 'Oh, I'm wide awake, young lady.'

Kate drew a little back. The man alarmed her.

'But how pale you look! You must be ill. Have you fallen down? See, Cecil, how the poor man's hand trembles.'

The trembling hand brought forth the lost pocket-book and handed it to its owner.

'Is this yours?'

Cecil took it slowly, and his eye searched the man's face. 'You picked it up?'

'Yes,' said the sandwich-man, 'and looked inside.'

The doctor opened the book and counted his notes. 'You are an honest man.'

'For once,' rejoined the fallen gentleman, with bitter irony.

'You will accept a reward?' and the young man offered a

sovereign. The other man's eyes glistened, but with a supreme effort he resisted the temptation.

'From you——no.'

During the exchange of these few brief words a great noise of voices and footsteps was heard approaching.

'Something has happened,' said Kate, looking timidly towards the end of the street, where the advance guard of a ragged crowd was visible. 'See, Cecil, they are coming this way.'

'Some street brawl, no doubt. I must take you out of the way. Come, my Kate.'

'No,' said Kate, 'they are carrying something—someone.'

'It must be a man hurt or run over,' said the doctor; 'they are carrying him on boards. It is a sandwich-man knocked down, I think.'

Kate advanced a few steps.

'Oh,' she said, 'not my poor sandwich-man—old Tom. Do something quickly for him, Cecil.'

'Go away at once, Kate,' said the doctor imperatively, for he saw a piece of sacking had been thrown over the still form. Then he approached the bearers and was lost to Kate's view in the little crowd.

'Let me look,' he said to the policeman, 'I am a surgeon.'

'The old chap has been run over by a 'bus. It ain't no use, sir; it's all over with the little Irishman.' Tom was a well-known character, and even the policeman showed a rough sympathy with his sudden end. Then decently and reverently they carried the dead man away, and no one saw that nestling in the rags above his breast was a little bunch of sweet-smelling violets.

As they carried him down the street the crown of his red head was visible. The sandwich-man beneath the colonnade made a stumble forwards as if intending to follow the procession; but he staggered and fell back with some sudden weakness on Cecil Dasborough's arm. He was muttering strange words—mad words, they thought.

'Dead is he before me! Won by a neck, Tom! He's got the game though I won the toss. Death, old fellow, you've cheated me again!'

The girl Kate was weeping softly. She turned to her lover, saying:

'He had no friends, no one who cared for him at all; but he had a daughter once, and she might be about my age. Poor Tom—poor old Tom. He said, "God bless you, Kate!"—oh, please remember he said, "God bless you, Kate!"' And she sobbed.

The young doctor half lifted, half dragged the sandwich-man to the shelter of the colonnade, and there loosened the neck-band of his shirt. He still muttered incoherently.

'The boards are not so heavy now, my man, for you. Has God Almighty given you the Cross for valour at last? Oh, I'm coming soon to give evidence in your favour, Tom—in your favour, do you hear?' He struck his breast. '*Here* stands the gentleman who was a liar and a thief.'

They thought his brain was weak, and that this was delirium caused by the sudden alarm. The stragglers from the crowd who yet remained behind jeered and mocked at the poor gibbering creature, but Kate and the doctor stood over him to protect him from actual molestation. With eyes blazing he went on more volubly.

'I robbed him, my servant, of honour, of home and wife and child—that child'—he pointed to Kate. 'I left him to bear the penalty of my crime, to be branded as a thief, and nothing can give back his blasted life. Out of the way there, you cursed fools! Tom, I am coming to bear witness for you before this day dies.' He struck right and left to clear a passage for himself. 'Oh, you were a brave man, Tom—no one knows how brave, but I know.' He took up his boards, glaring defiance at the insulting, grinning throng which pressed about him, mocking him with coarse street banter. He cast one strange look of fear at the weeping Kate and the young man who sought to draw her away.

'I must send in my papers to-night,' he said, drawing his breath heavily. 'The court-martial will sit before to-morrow's sun. Out of my way, you infernal crew!' And, pushing forwards, the sandwich-man walked down the street with a brave front, and no backward glance for friend or enemy. His face was set before a long, long journey.

That night he was missing from the ranks of his fellows, and thereafter his place knew him no more. Not even his boards were ever found, and how or where the end came none could say.

A week later Cecil and Kate Dasborough, man and wife, were sailing over the seas to a new and happier life, knowing nothing of the final tragedy of their parents' lives. But though the truth was veiled from her eyes, Kate yet remembered that a poor sandwich-man had blessed her before he died. And the sins of the fathers have not been visited on the children.

H. MUSGRAVE.

To the Unattainable.

DEAR, how many the songs I bring to you
 Woven of dream-stuffs, pleasure and pain,
 All the songs of my life I sing to you,
 And you hear, and answer again.
 Though no rhyme do your dear lips say to me,
 Yet, my poet, sweet songs you bring ;
 When you smile, then the angels play to me
 Tunes to the silent songs you sing.

All my soul goes forth in a song to you,
 All my deeds for your sake are done,
 All my laurels and bays belong to you,
 In your name are my battles won.
 Just by living you make life dear to me,
 Though your lips never speak my name ;
 'Tis your hands that in dreams appear to me,
 Bringing me all that I ask of fame.

What though here you are wholly lost to me,
 Though you never will know or see,
 Though life's pain be this worship's cost to me,
 Am I not richer than great kings be ?
 Have I not you, in the holiest heart of me—
 You, in the eyes which see you alone ?
 Shall I not rise to your soul, which is part of me,
 Till you shall meet me and know your own ?

E. NESBIT.

'Bighorn' Shooting in the Caucasus.

WHAT is sport ?

This is a vexed question, and one to which we could find no satisfactory answer up at Einaut last autumn. We disputed over it in the purple heather at lunch-time, and 'argued it out' untiringly over our pipes in 'the Huts' at night. One party maintained that grouse driving was the best of sport. The men of that party were either very good shots or very bad walkers.

The others jeered at 'driving' as senile and effeminate. These of course were either very good walkers or 'gentlemen who couldn't hit 'em driven,' as the keeper put it.

In our butts before the birds began to come (looking at first no larger than bees above the heather) we tried to formulate some satisfactory definition of sport.

We had no dictionaries up on the moors, and when we came to peruse them later on we found that they had no explanation to offer of this peculiarly British word, so we had to fall back upon our own definitions.

'The taking of the wild creatures of the earth by the exercise of man's strength, skill, or cunning: the fewer the appliances used by man, and the greater the difficulty and danger of the taking, the higher the form of sport.' This definition satisfied one party at any rate, although according to this horse-racing and boxing are not sport, and the pursuit of a shy Cræsus by a ball-room beauty is.

Poor Lindsay Gordon says:

No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.

And if he was right, and danger, self-denial, and the long odds against you do make the salt without which all sport would

lose its savour, then the sport of which I am going to tell must take a high rank indeed.

But to my text. Far away, on the very highest ridges, round the Mamisson pass, in the Central Caucasus, is the country of the Ossetes, a race (so men say) driven into these inaccessible solitudes by the relentless hostility of stronger tribes on the rich plains of Kabardah.

Few things live where the Ossetes find a home. The hungry tireless eagles wheel above them; the shrill whistle of the great mountain partridge may be heard at dawn, before the birds of prey are on the wing; and in the stillness of night the rattling of the moraine tells of the descent of shy herds of tûr (*Capra caucasica*) to their feeding grounds on the highest of the mountain pastures.

Tûr-hunting is almost the only joy left in life to the Ossete; the tûr's great curving horns are almost the only offering on the deserted shrines of the country, and except for berberries and a few rare herbs, the only wealth which the mountaineers have to barter with the wandering pedlars from Kutais, who have the rough horns polished, mounted in silver and converted into deep drinking vessels for the lazy wine-bibbing princes of Georgia and Mingrelia.

There was a time when brigandage and war broke the monotony of the Ossetes' life; but the old towers of grey stone are split and shattered now, and since the days of Poushkin the weapons of the mountaineers have rusted in enforced idleness.

The village at which I found myself early in September was close to the top of the Mamisson pass—let us say roughly 9,000 feet above sea-level—and round it Nature lay in a state of chaos; rugged cliff and ruined hamlet, a cold narrow valley without vegetation and almost without sunlight winding away to the far-off plains of Alaghir and Ardon. The village (heaven save the mark!) had climbed up above the road to so steep a perch, that you could not get to it on horseback, and when in it the huts were so piled one above the other that the roofs of one terrace formed the street in front of the next.

The saklis (huts) themselves were such as the cave-men of prehistoric times would have despised. Built of unmorticed fragments of grey rock, they had neither doors, windows, nor chimneys. You passed through the open doorway into a place of utter darkness, while the smoke from the smouldering sheep-droppings in

the centre of the floor forced its way out as best it could, through the chinks in the blackened walls.

When I was in Ossetia the harvest was just over. In most places the oat-fields were so uneven, and hung on such dizzy heights, that the grain had been torn up by the roots by hand. Much of the crop had never ripened from want of sun. What had ripened was having the grain stamped out of its ears by little black oxen, upon dry mud floors in the valley, the straw being reserved for winter fodder. Some idea of the poverty of Ossetia may be formed from the fact that the Russian Government tax is only seventy-five copecks (eighteenpence) per house here, whereas on the plain at Alaghir it is three roubles, or six shillings. But the highlanders find it harder to pay eighteenpence than the lowlanders do to pay four times that sum, though they are neither rich men nor skilled agriculturists in the Caucasian lowlands.

Poor though they are, my welcome amongst the Ossetes was a warm one. The fellowship and freemasonry of the chase was our bond of union, and one of the best of the mountain hunters was my host and guide. As he led me into his smoky sakli, his wife spread out the best sheepskin for me to sit upon, and silently took down the family caldron to cook me some supper, though she never greeted me with word or bow. I have never seen these women recognise in any way the entrance of an acquaintance or a guest, except by preparing to serve them. As soon as I could see through the smoke, I began to examine the inmates of the hut.

Two or three tall Ossetes in high sheepskin caps sat silently smoking in the background. A woman kneeling by the fire was making bread. An old crone, writhing and moaning in a corner, was dying of rheumatism. A little child was screaming on the floor because a live cinder had burnt her bare limbs. The crone was the grandmother of the family, but no one offered her help or sympathy. Everyone seemed to think it natural that she should suffer, and to hope that she would die soon, though they were too phlegmatic to hope much, even for that.

The child was the 'baby' of the house, yet even its mother never stopped cooking to try and soothe its pains. All the children (and there were many of them) were all but naked, cowering over the fire or crouching under old sheepskins, with wistful, hungry eyes fixed on the caldron.

The women were all silent, or if they spoke it was only in whispers. If they scolded a child, it was in a subdued hiss. A laugh I think would have frightened the whole household. Never

in my life have I seen anything to compare with the resigned, patient misery stamped on every feature of man and nature about the village of Tsamaruk.

The hardness of the rocks, the chill of the icefields, the gloom of their smoke-grimed hovels, seem to have got into the hearts of this people, starved by a beggarly nature, and bent by a life of toil.

The women, who should be to men's lives what pictures are to a book, music to the words of a song, are haggard and bowed down with drudgery before they are full-grown. They carry the burdens, till and reap the fields, while their husbands hunt or loaf.

They have not even retained woman's love of finery, or the least regard for their own personal appearance. And yet there are good-looking women amongst them, before the curse of their slavery has brushed off the bloom and obscured the beauty; and it was from these hovels that many a Turkish harem drew its fairest ornaments. The Ossetes remember with a sigh the days when they could sell their daughters for five hundred roubles, and be sure that the girls would find a home which would be paradise to them compared with that in which they were reared. For though he calls himself a Christian, and has one priest of the Greek Church to every dozen hamlets, the Ossete sold to the Turk, and would do so now if he was allowed to. 'Why,' exclaimed one old fellow, 'we may not buy a wife for ourselves now unless she is at least fifteen!'

As I lay awake watching the women making bread and sandals for the morrow's hunt, one face haunted me with its beauty. It was such an one as Murillo might have imagined in his happiest dreams, but the clothing of the poor little damsel was but a foul, flimsy rag, and the halo round her head, smoke from the wood fire.

It was midnight when my hunter woke me from a restless sleep, and the stars were shining brightly through the roof. The women were busy still. They evidently had not slept yet, and one young woman, when she had, with deft fingers, packed the cakes and sheep's tail which she had cooked into her husband's bashlik, laid her hand on his shoulder, and reaching up whispered something into his ear, which her eyes seemed to say was a prayer not to risk too much on those awful crags overhead. So love, maybe, adds its load to women's labour even in Ossetia.

But fancies and gloom vanished as soon as we set foot outside.

The stars burned with a keen brilliance above the snow peaks, and these looked very near. The air, chill as it was, made the

blood leap and thrill through your veins, and the moon-lit scenery was intoxicatingly lovely.

The leading hunter paused for a moment on the threshold and muttered something, a prayer or a charm, I know not which, and then, without a word or a sign, strode away uphill, with long quiet strides, which neither varied nor stopped for the next hour and a half.

There was something weird about the whole expedition. The silent figures in front, with their strongly marked aquiline features, their long sheepskin robes girt up at the waist, their noiseless sandalled feet, and long staves, might have been the Magi of old following the star of Bethlehem.

On the grass sparkling with frost the moonlight threw gigantic shadows of myself and my comrades, and these and ourselves seemed the only moving things in those mountain solitudes. There was not even a cloud in heaven to glide across the moon. It was hard, indeed, to remember that a fortnight before I had been jostled by a noisy, black-hatted crowd in Fleet Street.

At last we paused and looked back at the hamlet below us. It was already very far away, and still our road was straight uphill.

'Lo, the dawn!' said Shamyl, and as we looked a faint yellow tint came over the grey of the Eastern sky. 'We are late, very late,' he muttered, and again pressed on uphill. How I thanked heaven that the top of the ridge was already close at hand. When we gained it, we found the snow lying in considerable quantities, and in the first great drift of it I recognised fresh footprints of my old friend Michael, the Russian brown bear. What he was doing at midnight on such a height I could not guess, but as the snow was still crumbling slowly into the impressions made by his great paws he could not have been far ahead. In a moment fatigue was forgotten, and I was going at best pace from one point of vantage to another, leaving my guides behind me, in my eagerness to get to my game.

Unluckily the old rascal had winded us, and far down the steep slopes I could see his track lead on, until at last I made him out, shuffling along among the boulders nearly a mile away.

Clearly it was no good following him if we meant to kill a tûr that day, so with some reluctance we let him go, more especially as Shamyl's few sheep had been sadly harried by him or his friends in the last few weeks. The bear on the main chain does a good deal of damage to the natives' flocks and herds,

although his relatives down below on the Black Sea Coast are honest vegetarians. And now the dawn was really upon us. The stars had lost their strength and grown pale and grey, and a little fluttering, uncertain wind had arisen, wafted from the wings of the departing night. Adai Kom Koch the mountaineers called our hunting ground, and as I lay on a huge slab of rock, thawing the snow with which it was sprinkled, this is what I saw.

The ridge we were on was well above the snow-line, but of such splintered and precipitous crags was it composed, that the snow could only lie amongst them in patches. Of course there were no flowers nor any vestige of vegetation, and without the snow-shroud, which should have covered them, the rocks looked hideously stern and cruel in the grey dawn. We were in a wilderness of ice and ironstone. I was beginning to think that no beast could so hate life as to live up there, when Shamyl laid his hand upon my arm. The old hunter's eyes were gleaming with suppressed excitement, and by signs he made me understand that there were bighorns somewhere down below.

In spite of his outstretched arms and pointing finger I could not see them myself, although all the rocks beneath us were distinct enough.

Suddenly, what I had taken for a fragment of the ironstone crag turned slowly round, and for a moment I saw the great arc of the tûr's horns clearly defined against the sky.

He was a good four hundred yards off, probably more, and there was no reason why, if he would but look away from us again, we should not decrease that distance by half before I risked a shot. As quietly as his head had come into sight, so without noise or warning did it disappear.

'Come on,' hissed Vassily, and like snakes we glided from stone to stone, silent and uncomplaining, though the ironstone cut and bruised us at every turn. Suddenly Vassily stopped and sat up.

'Gone!' he said; 'Sheitan.'

Whether he meant that for swearing or not I can only guess. If he did, I don't think that dissyllable expressed enough for two. Where the tûr had stood was the extremest edge of a sheer precipice, from which he must have been looking down upon the glacier a thousand feet below.

These beasts seem to love such a perch, where nothing else would dare to stand, gazing out into the profound abysses below, as if rejoicing in a world to which no other created beast could

attain. But how had he ever left his post without our seeing or hearing him? In the wonderful stillness of these high alps we must have heard a pebble fall, if one had fallen, and it seemed moreover as if there was no way except for wings by which he could have escaped us unseen. Shamyl could not explain it, and when I appealed to him in pantomime, 'Where is he?' the old man only lifted his hands palms outwards, shrugged his shoulders, and ejaculated again, 'Sheitan.'

For anything I know to the contrary, Vassily may have been right. Whatever the horned beast was, it certainly vanished in a most uncanny manner.

For a while we sat spying out the different gorges with our glasses, seeing one or two little herds of young rams or ewes, creeping along the face of different distant precipices, from their night's pastures to the snowy fastnesses, in which they rest all day, but none came in our direction, and as we saw no good heads amongst them we let them go unmolested, and resumed our climb.

Our way all that morning lay round the face of a great wall of crumbling rock. Sometimes we had a dizzy sheep walk, beaten out by the tûr's feet, to follow, and sometimes even that failed, and we had to balance or cling by our finger-nails to a wall that seemed to lean out towards us and try to push us into the great mist-filled abyss which yawned below.

But neither Shamyl nor myself was much troubled with dizziness, so all went well, except that the two pairs of gloves, one of dogskin and one of wool, which I had put on new that morning, were in rags by noon, and my hands were torn and bleeding. The raw-hide moccasins and thick woollen stockings which should have covered my feet were distributed among the rocks, and my feet were as torn and as badly hurt as my hands.

At mid-day, we rested on a long narrow spur of rock which hung out over the valley like a ship's bowsprit over the waves. Here we ate our lunch of dry bread and sheep's tail, and surely no wine was ever more welcome than that long, long draught of sour milk which we sucked from the goat's skin on our porter's shoulders.

It is hard work climbing to these heights, but the pleasure is great too, when you lie resting on some such crag as ours, your lungs full of the strong mountain air, and all the petty troubles of life left in those miserable civilised flats below you.

As long as he hunts six days a week by the snow line and sleeps the seventh, I don't think that the Ossete is much to be itied after all.

When evening began to fall we were crouching behind a

boulder watching the ways which led from the icefields to a tiny patch of grass, just within long rifle-shot of our ambushade.

The mist was wetting us through, and the wind made my bleeding fingers stiff with cold. I was longing for a fire and supper, and rather inclined to growl at my long day of unrewarded toil and the folly of staying so late at such heights. A sudden torrent of small stones rattling down the slopes above us, brought me back to life with a start. As I turned, Vassily's eye was fixed on me and his face told me all I wanted to know. At last the tûr were coming to feed.

On a ridge above I could see them standing, clearly outlined against the sky, still as stone statues, their heads turned inquiringly in our direction. So they stood, looking down into the valley, seven in number, and we lay and watched them whilst the mist soaked and the wind pierced us through and through. For fully three quarters of an hour they neither fed nor moved a muscle that we could see. Then, one by one, in the fast fading light they disappeared behind the ridge. As the last head vanished, Vassily snatched up his alpenstock and, stooping low, ran along the rocks towards a kind of couloir, up which he wormed himself, with me close at his heels. Then we had to cross a steep face of unpleasantly crumbling rock, in the middle of which a great rushing sound overtook us, and several tons of ironstone came bounding down, passing right between my guide and myself.

For a moment we both stopped and glanced with a shudder at the great gulf into which the stone-fall had rushed, and then pushed on again.

'One rock had fallen and missed us, the next might not; we had better be moving,' we thought. Besides our reward was very near.

By putting our backs against one side and our feet against the other, my man and I worked our way up what mountaineers call 'a chimney.' From the top of this we hoped for an extended view, but we were doomed to disappointment, for as we emerged from this cleft in the rock, a mist wreath, which had been floating up after us for some time, caught and enveloped us in its folds. For at least ten minutes we were obliged to stay where we were, blind, shivering and afraid to stir, and uncertain whether we might not have to stop there until morning.

I should never forget the rising of that mist-cloud if I lived on through eternity.

As it rolled back, I saw within fifty yards of me, motionless

as if carved in marble, and seeming gigantic in the queer grey gloaming, the very king of the ibex. The wind was from him to us, and he had evidently come to his post after we had reached ours, so that he had no suspicion of our presence. To my eyes he looked monstrous, but excitement had made me incapable of judging of the relative size of things. The mountain peaks were trifles compared to the great beast, standing at gaze within a stone's throw of me, his massive horns and strongly-built body seeming to have grown out of the rock on which he stood.

And now a strange thing happened. As I raised my rifle to my shoulder Vassily gripped my arm and whispered, 'Ne be' ('Don't fire').

The tûr heard him and turned. My only chance seemed to be to fire as he hesitated, and so, with what steadiness I could muster up, I pressed the trigger. As I did so the mist rolled right back, and the bullet told loudly on the ram's shoulder. For a moment he stood stock still, then a shiver shook him from head to foot, he turned slowly half round towards me, and then pitched headfirst from the crag on which he had been standing *into the clouds below*. I had stalked my tûr, and got within fifty yards of him; I had had my shot, and put my bullet within an inch of the spot aimed at; my prey died within a stone's throw of me, and yet Vassily and I knew that he was farther beyond our reach than any live beast on the mountains. There was no road to his last resting place for any except the vultures, and their feast would be one of fragments.

It was past midnight when we lay on the floor of a hut in Tsamaruk, drinking soup made of milk and bacon-fat flavoured with wild thyme—not a delicate dish, but, after our twenty-four hours' work, anything warm and filling was welcome. The men wanted to lie down under a boulder near the glacier for the night, so as to renew the chase next morning, but I was hardly in training then for two consecutive days of such hard work, and insisted on blundering down to the village in the dark, where we lay almost too tired to eat, and quite too tired to talk. And yet one shilling a day was the pay my Ossete porter asked for this work; and though I have had my share of luck with all sorts of game, from moose to jack snipe, from grizzlies to the British bunny, I would rather have one day with the ibex of Ossetia than a week of any other sport I know.

C'est la perte qui fait le joueur.

CLIVE PHILLIPPS-WOLLEY.

The Mischief of Monica.

By L. B. WALFORD.

CHAPTER I.

‘MISCHIEF IS THE VERY SPICE OF LIFE.’

How brew the brave drink, Life?
 Take of the herb hight morning joy,
 Take of the herb hight evening rest,
 Pour in pain lest bliss should cloy,
 Shake in sin to give it zest . . .
 Then down with the brave drink, Life.—BURTON.

‘WELL!’

There is no word in the English language which has more intonations than the ejaculation ‘Well!’ It has as many meanings as there are notes of the gamut. There is the ‘Well!’ of pure preface, the ‘Well!’ of utter indifference, the ‘Well!’ of good humour, the ‘Well!’ of chagrin, the ‘Well!’ of amazement, and the ‘Well!’ of despair—together with all the hybrid ‘Wells!’ formed by the fusion of one or more of the above with others, *ad infinitum*. It is therefore something to say for the ‘Well!’ which stands at the head of this chapter, that it was as fully charged with significance and import as though it contained the very marrow and pith of a dozen good round ‘Wells!’ rolled into one. It was the ‘Well!’ of youthful ferocity and self-will armed to the teeth; and yet it had a kind of lurking gleam about it too, which, like a grain of some sweet spice thrown into a pint of bitter mixture, just took off the sharpness which otherwise might have set the teeth on edge.

‘Well!’ said Miss Monica Lavenham, and looked about her.

She was in a handsome—nay, a gorgeous—drawing-room, fitted up in the latest style: heavy with velvet, and rich with colour

On every side was luxury; on every hand comfort. Above all, order reigned supreme. So much her eyes took in, and then, not being a young lady with a turn for furniture, she walked to the window and looked out. Her sister was already there, having also given utterance to a counter 'Well!'—and the two now regarded each other with curiously long faces and rueful eyes.

'It is a regular take in, Bell.'

'Humph!'

'A Hall, indeed!'

'Yes, indeed.'

'A mere villa!'

'Take care, someone may hear you.'

'No one can hear. The rooms are a tolerable size, and that is something. But I never was so thoroughly—why, there is not even an avenue! We are actually on the road!' in accents of deep disgust. 'The road is there,' pointing with her finger—'there, where that carriage is driving along! The dust comes over the hedge. And this little particle of shrubbery, where we pop in at one gate and out at the other, is all that separates us from the high road!'

Isabel listened gloomily.

'The whole place is a fraud,' proceeded her sister, who was evidently the speaker of both. 'When I saw we were turning in at that little lodge down there, my very heart died within me. What in all the world, Bell, are we to do? We can't go on with it. We can't live in a villa. We can't look out upon a road. We can't——'

The door opened, and a respectable-looking elderly man-servant appeared, who, with something of the air of being engaged in an unusual occupation, set out a small table, covered it with a cloth, and deposited thereon a handsome silver tea service, with cakes, bread and butter, plates and knives; everything, in short, provocative of a tempting little meal. The hour—for it was just five o'clock—made the refreshment welcome and natural. Yet no sooner had the door finally closed than the sisters, who had been watching the arrangements with an air of mingled curiosity and amusement, again looked at each other, and simultaneously repeated the same word 'Well!' into which one of them had before contrived to infuse such an infinity of meaning. After which they drew their chairs up to the table.

'Tis an odd set out; but I don't suppose he had ever done such

a thing in his life till now,' said Monica, with more alacrity than she had hitherto evinced. 'And certainly the poor old thing was in the right. I am dying of thirst. Oh, this tea is good!—men's tea is always good. That is why I like my tea at a club. Clubs! Ah me—ah me! I will be months, perhaps years, before we set foot in a club again, I daresay. But do look, Bell, what fine old china! Would not Aunt Fanny have admired this china? She would find little else to admire in our new home, I am afraid,'—with a sigh.

'Are we to consider we have come to live here?' said Isabel, with a slow, solemn emphasis that made it appear as though the idea had been presented to her mind for the first time. 'For the present of course we have,—there was nothing else for us to do. Uncle Schofield would never have adopted us, and promised to leave us his money——'

— 'Sh! take care!'

'Unless we had come,' continued Isabel, lowering her tone; though indeed it was only a certain caution born of the life the sisters had hitherto led which had induced the hasty warning, since the dulcet tones of both, tones peculiarly soft and well modulated, could by no possibility have been overheard by any one outside the apartment. 'If we had refused,' proceeded she, but Monica interposed.

'I do not believe we could have refused,' said Monica.

'Oh, we *could*, I suppose.'

'I fancy not: not until we are twenty-one, at least. We are not twenty—I am not twenty yet, and you are not nineteen. I am sure I understood that we had no choice.'

'All I meant to say was that, even if we *had* had a choice, we could not throw away our chances.'

'Of course not.'

'So here we have got to be.'

'It is fraud, all the same,' said Monica, cutting herself a slice of cake with somewhat more complacency. 'The old gentleman has good tea and good cake—I will say so much for him; but he has *done* us, and done us shamefully about everything else. I don't say he ever actually drew up a map of his estate, or described the family mansion; but he wrote upon paper with "Flodden Hall" at the top of the page; he said there was plenty of room for us to run about in—to "run about in," Bell, with checked aprons and bibs, I presume—and he could assure us of "plenty of amusement in a hospitable neighbourhood." Good

Heavens, Bell! if this is the "Hall," what will the neighbourhood be?'

Monica and Isabel Lavenham, two young beauties of high fashion and much experience of the world, although, as we have seen, yet in the early days of womanhood, had indeed some cause for astonishment and apprehension in their present surroundings, according to their views of life. Their mother had been a plain merchant's daughter; but she had not only been a very pretty woman, she had possessed a large fortune, and the two inducements combined had brought forward Colonel the Hon. Charles Lavenham as a candidate for her hand.

The marriage had given the satisfaction on both sides which such a match is sure to do.

Colonel Lavenham was as handsome as his wife, and after a more distinguished, patrician fashion; in consequence, no one was surprised that the two little girls who had been born during the two years succeeding the marriage proved to be examples of childish loveliness. Soon after the birth of the second the mother had died; and although predictions had not been wanting of a speedy re-marriage on the part of the widower, these had never been fulfilled.

Instead, Colonel Lavenham had taken to the race-course and the gaming-table; had dissipated the principal portion of his wife's money; and had finally departed this life, leaving debts and troubles behind him.

His daughters, then on the verge of womanhood, had been consigned thereafter to the care of his childless brother, another soldier of the name, whose lively and easy-tempered, if somewhat feather-brained spouse, was the very woman to be transported by the idea of producing in society two nieces so sure of success as the youthful Monica and Isabel.

The arrangement had suited everybody; and two successive London seasons had been gone through with *éclat*, when fate, which will sometimes interfere with our 'best-laid schemes,' suddenly pulled the check-string, and brought everything to a standstill.

Mrs. Lavenham became ill, and was ordered abroad to try the effects of foreign waters; whilst her husband, as if he had only waited for such a prescription to be written, forthwith developed a complaint requiring treatment very nearly similar, threw up his commission, and proclaimed himself 'an old fogey.' The two agreed to give up their London house, disperse their establishment,

and trot about the Continent together, attended merely by a valet and a waiting-maid.

All had been arranged, and the spirits of both had revived under the prospect of change, and an easy life with no demands upon it, when suddenly Mrs. Lavenham had exclaimed: 'But what about the girls? We cannot possibly take Monica and Isabel with us.'

'Certainly not,' her husband had replied promptly. 'They are expensive young women, and we shall not now have more than just enough to keep ourselves comfortably. We have spent a lot of late, living in the manner we have done, and it has been principally for their sakes. I am sure the balls, and parties—both of them ought to have been off our hands long before this time. And I don't know where their money goes to, if it is not spent, every penny of it, on their backs. They have each a hundred and fifty pounds a year: a hundred and fifty pounds a year and only themselves to spend it upon; they ought to have been able to do more than just clothe themselves out of a sum like that. They——'

'Oh, well, my dear!' Mrs. Lavenham was easy-going, as we have said. 'Oh, well, a hundred and fifty a year is no great amount; and they are lovely girls, and have to be properly dressed' (conscious of having more than once quieted a dress-maker by small sums out of her own pocket, both Monica's and Isabel's having run dry). 'All the world allows that your nieces are——'

'Never mind—never mind. They must learn not to look upon themselves as my nieces now,' somewhat shortly; 'they must be someone else's nieces in future.'

'My dear, what do you mean?'

'Why, what I mean is clear enough, if you will take the pains to see it. Who is that uncle they have got, down there in Lancashire, that brother of their mother's—Schofield is his name, eh? I have been making inquiries about him, and I find he is as rich as Croesus, unmarried, and quite disposed to be friendly. It is a perfect Providence for the girls that there is such a person. As you say, they are nice girls enough: pretty, and——'

'Pretty! Why they are far more than——'

'Than anything *he* is ever likely to have met with, at any rate. They ought to do well down there. A Liverpool or Manchester magnate is not to be sneezed at in these days. By Jove! I think

we have been fools to have neglected such an opportunity before. Directly I made up my mind to retire, and go in for health and that sort of thing along with you, I saw at once it would never do to take girls like Monica and Isabel to Monte Carlo, and——'

'Are we going to Monte Carlo?'

'We shall winter there. It will be the very place for us. But we should get into a sea of troubles if we had two such appendages as these two hanging on to us. They would be flirting all over the place, with every scoundrelly and beggarly "Count" they might pick up. Foreign health resorts are the very deuce for girls like Monica and Bell,' he had concluded, decisively.

In this his wife, who had been really ailing, and who was now as much taken up with her own invalid habits and prospects as she had formerly been with her rounds of pleasure, had acquiesced almost with a sigh of relief.

She was fond of her young beauties in her way. She had been proud of them; had been indebted to them; had perceived that they had been of use to her in society; had brought the best men to her house, and made her what she never otherwise would have been—one of the smartest, most sought after hostesses in London. But she instinctively felt that all this was now at an end; nay, that with her retirement from the social stage, and adoption of an altered routine, Monica and Isabel would no longer suit their requirements to hers. They were still in their heyday, still demanding their full measure of fun and frolic, still requiring her to bear her part in their triumphal progress, and still, it must be owned, intolerant of any hindrance or obstacle which impeded it.

She could not say that they had been unkind—nay, Monica had been positively sympathetic and pitiful when informed that her aunt was suffering; but she had read disappointment and vexation on her brow, as on Bell's, every time a new prohibition had had to be made, or a new hour kept; and though nothing would be said, there had been for some time past a growing anxiety, quite unconnected with any other anxiety, in the breast of the faded, sickly woman, who yet clung to the remembrance of past triumphs and successes—namely, the apprehension of what would be the final attitude of her gay young nieces towards her final self. If she were about to turn into a peevish tyrant of a sick-room, what would the girls think?

Mrs. Lavenham could not endure that the girls should think

her a bore, a marplot, or a nuisance. Other chaperons were, she knew, often enough regarded in some such light; but it had been her pride to believe that she was on better terms with her two superb nieces, of whose opinions she stood in no small awe, and whose approbation of her appearance, or of her toilette, was a thing to be obtained. If they should begin now to think her humdrum, or tiresome! And she really did want to be humdrum, that was the truth. She felt fit for nothing else, could not rouse herself to be anything else.

It had ended in a letter being written to Mr. Schofield.

Mr. Schofield had responded with an alacrity that had almost surprised himself, and that would have been deeply resented by some other branches of his family had they known of it; as, however, it had been the outcome of several rather important admixtures, we had better inform our readers of these, and then leave them to judge for themselves whether or not such resentment would have been a natural and creditable one.

The new uncle, who, according to Colonel Lavenham's theory, had been created in the very nick of time to meet an awkward necessity, was more of a man of means than a man of culture. Yet he was not a vulgar man. He had no vulgar propensities, nor tastes. He was neither ostentatious nor purseproud, and his daily life was on the whole a praiseworthy one.

But there are many gradations between a mind superior, refined, elevated; and one of ordinary capacity, satisfied with poor pasturage, and confined within a narrow range. Mr. Schofield read his newspaper, and fancied he cared about many things which really no more interested him, no more moved him nor touched him, than if they had been written in an unknown language. He read his paper because other men read theirs. As he went to business every morning he took his 'Daily Post' with him into the railway carriage as a matter of course; then he opened it, scanned it, and folded it hither and thither, making a remark to his opposite neighbour during the process, as a part of his day's work; but we may safely affirm that from the moment in which it was laid aside, (he generally left it behind in the carriage,) till the following morning when its successor was taken up, no single thought of anything contained therein, with the exception of the market reports, ever crossed our merchant's brain.

Thus it will be seen that he was not what might be called an intellectual man.

On the other hand, Mr. Schofield had his opinions, and

they were opinions which did him credit. His views of his duty towards God and his neighbour were clear and defined, and, we may add, were carried out in a manner that might have shamed many a more pretentious Christian. He worshipped devoutly and gave liberally, and he lived a quiet, blameless life.

Now we come to his receiving Colonel Lavenham's letter.

That letter came to Mr. Joseph Schofield, as the recollection of himself came to its writer, at a most opportune moment. He had just finished building and decorating the handsome and luxurious residence which Monica's cruel tongue now termed 'a mere villa.' He had planted the grounds and gardens, stocked the vineries, laid on the hot-water apparatus; he had arranged the stables, seen to it that every horse had a loose box; purchased a few new vehicles, enlarged and readjusted the whole establishment, within and without, and was caught, as it were, in the very act of wondering what there could possibly remain to do which he had left undone?

It was dull to be doing nothing. He had been living in a round of small excitements which had given a zest to every day of the week; every evening, when he had come back from his work, there had been something to be seen to and decided upon; and on Sundays, when no workmen were about, and no orders were being awaited, he had found a quiet and intense satisfaction in strolling from place to place, and examining in each particular department all that had been effected since he had last thus strolled.

But at length a point had been reached where it had seemed there remained absolutely nothing which could be improved, or altered; and he had had one long, lonely evening in which to digest the unpalatable truth. He had felt as if he never could be so busily employed, nor so well amused again.

The next morning's post had brought Colonel Lavenham's letter; a letter which had been penned with considerable skill and adroitness; a diplomatic, wily epistle, wherein the beauty, talent, and amiable qualities of 'our and your charming nieces' had been no less dwelt upon, than had the forlorn condition and dependent circumstances of the orphans.

Colonel Lavenham had lamented in feeling terms his utter inability to do for the girls what he would 'so gladly, so readily have done;' he had bemoaned the hard necessity which had compelled his dear invalid wife and himself to recognise that a parting was inevitable;—but he had also contrived to insinuate

in pretty round terms—although not offensive ones—that his brother's children were equally related to Mr. Schofield as to himself, and that he had, if anything, rather stepped out of his way than otherwise to make a home for their 'mutual nieces' hitherto.

'Mutual nieces' might not be good English, but it went straight to the 'mutual uncle's' heart. Mr. Schofield fancied that he had received a manly, straightforward letter—one in which there had been no patronising tone of superiority—one in which a nobleman's son, a colonel in the Life Guards, a swell in every way, had treated him as an equal and as a relation, and he was pleased accordingly.

He was very much pleased. It seemed to him all very fair and right.

It was perfectly true that Charles Lavenham's brother had so far been a father to Charles and Mary's children; and that being a married man, though not a family man, he had undoubtedly been the proper guardian and foster-parent hitherto.

That he had himself never been asked to take any charge of the orphans—nay, that he had never so much as once set eyes upon them, was nothing. He had not wanted to see them; he had not thought about them. He had supposed they were all right; indeed he had known that they were being properly cared for; but as he had never once met his sister during the few years which had intervened between her marriage and her death, he had in his quiet way taken it for granted that she had, as it were, become a naturalised Lavenham, and no more a Schofield.

Without resenting this, its effect had been to free our elderly bachelor from any further interest or responsibility as regarded his unknown relatives. He had his own friends, his own surroundings, his own regular and congenial mode of life; and if any thought of his aristocratic connections, denizens of another sphere, ever crossed his mind, it was to be well content that they should be in existence, but to be equally resigned to their entire abstention from any personal intercourse with himself.

Now, however, he experienced a new and sudden revulsion of feeling.

Heyday! What was about to happen now? What would people say of him now? Here was he going to have two fine nieces, two young women of fashion, come down to keep house for him, and do the honours of his new mansion! It would be said that he had known beforehand for whom he was preparing draw-

ing-rooms and dressing-rooms, and that he had meant all along that Mr. Schofield's relations should cut a dash second to none in the neighbourhood. Curiously enough, almost his first recognised thought was a swift recollection upon a matter which had hitherto hung in the balance: he now decided, in the twinkling of an eye, to have a nice open barouche, instead of the usual waggonette then in vogue for country use.

Just so: a barouche, of course, would be the only carriage suitable for the young ladies his nieces, when they should desire to make calls and drive about the surrounding neighbourhood.

Before the letter had been answered, before he had finished the last sip of his coffee, he had in his mind's eye seen himself handing up with his own hands the beautiful Miss Lavenhams to their seats in an exquisitely appointed, well-swung equipage; giving the order to the coachman, and waving farewells to them as they rolled off down the drive. He had seen them returning full of news and gaiety; beheld the two elegant figures, choicely arrayed (he liked to see well-dressed women), trip downstairs subsequently to receive his guests; later on, adorn his well-covered table; flavour every course with their bright, amusing vivacity; take the lead in conversation; a little overawe the homelier folk around—why not? why not?—and, in short, be the credit of the family and the sunshine of the home.

In return for which nothing old Joe Schofield could do should be wanting.

No wonder Colonel Lavenham found his so-called 'brother-in-law's' letter all that was handsome and satisfactory; voted the old boy a trump; and signed himself 'brother-in-law' in return, when inditing a joyful acceptance on the part of the girls.

'It is a piece of luck you may never have again,' he informed them, when concluding a peroration on rich merchants, bachelor hosts, and kind relations. 'Whatever you do, you, Monica, and you, Bell—whatever you do,' with a solemnity and impressiveness such as he had seldom, if ever, before manifested, '*don't throw it away.*'

The two who listened had been accustomed to look up to the speaker. He was wise in the only wisdom they knew anything about. They perceived him to be successful in the only world for which they had any regard. It was natural that they should now accept his dictum, see with his eyes, and do as they were bid.

And then it was the month of July, and, though the season was not over, it was drawing towards a close. Colonel Lavenham

assured the two that they would do well to quit the scene, without lingering to the last, even though they might be invited to do so by one or another, after the house in Lowndes Square should be given up. He had protested that they were going to a lovely country home—he knew Lancashire well, had shot there, by Jove! when a young man; remarkably fine country it was, and they would have every luxury, and a capital old boy of an uncle to do what they pleased with. It would be odds but they got old Joseph to take a house in Belgravia next season, if they played their cards well; and who could say but he himself and their Aunt Fanny mightn't be in town, too, some time in May or June, if their aunt were well enough to run over for a month or so, and if neither of them was married before that time—ha! ha! ha!—and so he had rattled on, until insensibly all the party were more cheerful than they had been for some time previously.

The parting had been got over with equal ease: with hilarious prognostications on the one part, and arch rejoinders on the other; and, finally, Monica and Isabel had found themselves off on their northern journey, surcharged with all the curiosity and joyous anticipation which their well-satisfied relative could contrive to insert into their bosoms—emotions which, alas! only lasted until they had turned in at the carriage gates of Flodden Hall, and which fell to the ground with a clash when Monica, standing up in the midst of Mr. Schofield's splendid reception-room, gave utterance to that one terribly significant '*Well!*' wherewith our story opens.

CHAPTER II.

TWO EVES IN ONE PARADISE.

Without the smile from partial beauty won,
Oh, what were man? A world without a sun.—CAMPBELL.

BEING a man of method, Mr. Schofield did not return from business any earlier than usual on the all-important day which was to see his bachelor household invaded by two prospective female sovereigns; but he walked up from the station with a quicker step, and shut the entrance gate behind him with a sharper click, because of something very like a flutter within his breast; and he looked quickly round, with an eye that took in everything,

and was aware whether every direction had been carried out on the instant, as he approached the house.

Nothing was out of gear. The drive had been swept till the smallest twig had disappeared; the velvet lawn had been freshly mown, and every edge of every flower-bed neatly clipped; the flower-beds themselves were a blaze of bloom, and around and within the entrance porch brilliant exotics made the whole warm air heavy with fragrance.

'It's a Paradise,' murmured Joseph Schofield to himself, as he drew a sigh of satisfaction. 'A perfect Paradise! They can have seen nothing of the kind to beat this, I take it. . . And they fresh from London houses and streets, too! Poor girls! I wonder—ahem!' and he stopped short, and looked wistfully at the door-bell.

It was a heavy, wrought-iron, hanging bell, massive and handsome, in keeping with all the rest; and its owner knew that it would raise a loud, solemn note of warning which none could mistake, were he to pull the handle. Should he do so, and desire to be conducted into the ladies' presence? On the other hand, he did not feel quite, absolutely sure that the ladies had arrived. The very lightest of light wheel-marks had undoubtedly been left upon the drive, but those would have been there in any case, as the carriage which had been sent to meet the travellers would have had to pass the front door, empty or full, on its return to the stables. Had they come? he wondered,

Then he turned, and took a peep into the large, square, turkey-carpeted hall within, and there he saw what settled the question. He saw a lady's pretty little reticule, which had been dropped on one of the tables, and forgotten. All other signs of luggage, wraps, travelling bags, and the usual paraphernalia, had disappeared. But the little Russia-leather reticule was enough.

As our merchant's glance fell upon it, the colour mantled faintly to his cheek. He had not known before that he was a shy man; he was not supposed to be a shy man; he could go out to dinner, and offer his arm to madam or miss without any feeling of embarrassment; and he could entertain again with equal complacency; but—but—well, he supposed he was just a little nervous on this occasion. Meeting ordinary ladies in an ordinary way, where there was no need to trouble oneself as to what to say to them, and no reason for minding whether one pleased them or not, was not altogether the same thing as having to welcome

to your roof two unknown female relatives, reputed beauties, and women of fashion.

Of course he should not think of saluting his nieces—he blushed up to the very ears at the idea of such a thing—but should he, or should he not, make them a little speech of hospitality? Also, what about calling them by their names? And if they should begin to thank him—oh, how he hoped they would not begin to thank him—but what then, must he respond? To say, ‘My dears, all mine is yours,’ might possibly convey an intention which, whatever time might bring forth, was not as yet matured. To say——. The door at the far end of the hall opened, and the tall figure of Monica Lavenham appeared on the threshold.

Tired of sitting still in the, to her, dull, uninteresting apartment, she had just announced to her sister her intention of exploring the outer domain, and, as she termed it, ‘learning the worst,’ when the projected campaign was suddenly nipped in the bud by the apparition of her new uncle, halting, irresolute, within his own doorway.

For him it was a moment of relief. We have said that he was not a vulgar man; his air was perfectly free from self-importance and his manner from ostentation. Obligated now to step forward and greet his visitors, he underwent the ordeal with a simplicity and frankness which produced an immediate impression. ‘Uncle Lavenham was right about our relation himself,’ reflected Monica, who, it may be remarked, usually thought for both. ‘The rest may be, and *is* a fraud—a vile, premeditated fraud—but Uncle Schofield is the right sort of Uncle Schofield. I should not wonder if something might be made of him, after all!’

‘And he certainly will leave us all his money,’ cogitated Bell, on whom this part of Colonel Lavenham’s oracular wisdom had made a profound impression.

‘We were just beginning to wonder when we were to see you, Uncle Schofield,’ began the more talkative niece in sprightly accents; ‘we have been here an hour, and everyone has been so kind to us. We have had tea; and we were thinking of taking a stroll in the lovely garden. May we go into the garden?’

She could not have suggested anything he would have liked better. What a charming girl! What a pleasant winning manner! What a sweet voice! Her sister, too, standing smiling by (they had early been taught to smile, poor things!) he scarcely knew which he liked the most.

As for their beauty, truth compels us to state that at the first blush Mr. Schofield did not think quite so much of his nieces' beauty as he had expected to do. In his quiet way he was somewhat of an authority; and having read novels (yes, reader, novels; start not, for there is no greater novel-reader than your sober British merchant), Mr. Joseph Schofield, having, as we say, regularly read his novel every evening after dinner, for the past thirty years or so, had been prepared for something very magnificent indeed.

He had had a notion that he should have his breath taken away by a vision,—the first sight of a novelist's heroine is always a 'vision'—a dazzling mist of golden locks, sunny eyes, damask cheeks, and the like. Instead of which, the youthful travellers, who were somewhat fatigued after a hot, dusty journey, considerably disturbed in mind, put out, let down, and flat altogether, looked merely a couple of elegant young women, with oval or rather pear-shaped faces, correct features, and small heads finely poised upon their shoulders.

Monica had taken off her hat, and he could see that she had waves of ruddy-brown hair, and when he came to think of it afterwards, he could call to mind a pair of dark eyes under straight-barred eyebrows,—but on the first meeting there had been a momentary disappointment.

With their soft, confiding address, however, and with their first request and proposition, he had no fault to find.

'If you are not too tired,' he responded delightedly; 'I am sure I—but just wait till I get the keys, for it is nearly six o'clock, and the houses may be locked for the night.'

'Pray take no trouble for us,' but before the sisters could proceed further, their host had vanished.

The smile on their faces changed its character. 'What an oddity!' murmured Bell.

'Not a bad oddity,' murmured her sister back.

'I wish we could have gone alone.'

'I don't; I think he is likely to prove as good ground for exploration as his "houses." I shall shirk those houses; at least, unless the grapes are ripe, but I am afraid it is rather early for grapes.' Mr. Schofield was seen approaching. 'Is it not rather early for grapes, Uncle Schofield?' inquired Monica, cheerfully. She was an adept at thus dovetailing her asides into open conversation.

'The houses are only a year old,' replied he, 'so we must not expect too much. But I believe they are doing well.'

'I thought they looked new,' proceeded the same speaker, taking as it were, naturally, the principal part in the conversation, 'the house and stables, and everything is new, is it not?' How she did it let others say, but even in the simple query there was an inflection of interest and appreciation which was not lost upon her auditor.

'Everything, everything,' rejoined he, promptly. 'A friend had built a house I fancied, so I sent to him for the name of his architect. Then I just handed it all over to the same fellow—for I know nothing about such matters—and it was done as you see it. The stables, you see, are in the same style; and the lodges, and that little cottage down there; there is a nice old body living down there, who remembers your mother; perhaps you will go and see her sometimes—she would take it kind of you; and here, you see, is the paddock for the horses; and beyond it, is the meadow for the cows. Those are the piggeries down there—we raise prize pigs; it is a kind of hobby of mine. And that high wire fencing is for the poultry yard—we have a few prize hens, too—it is not much of a farm, not much, only a bit,—but it is amusing in its way; the out-door servants and dairymaids have their quarters here; and that is the head-gardener's little girl in the red frock, down by the brook.'

Had the two whom Mr. Schofield was conducting round his premises been ordinary visitors none of the above would have been forthcoming. To him his horses, cows, pigs, and poultry were an occupation and a pleasure; but he had none of the egotistical delight in details respecting them, which might have been inferred from so long a speech. He simply told his nieces all that there was to tell, because they were his nieces; because his home was to be their home; because it was his part to instruct and theirs to learn.

Nor were his listeners sufficiently wanting in acuteness to be misled.

('He is all right, as I said he was,' nodded Monica to herself. 'Quite a dear; so earnest about his piggeries and his henneries; and the place is a little, a very little, better than I thought it was. I had no idea it opened out at the back, as it does. There is certainly more land than at first appeared; and those are fine woods overhanging the meadow; and, thank goodness! there *is* a meadow. It will be some sort of outlet; some means of escape. I spy a shady lane, too; and the brook is really very pretty, winding about down in the hollow below. We must have some seats made.) 'Uncle Schofield,' aloud, 'what a charming bank this is! You have some

seats up and down, I daresay. Do you often bring out your book and read here, under the trees?’

‘Not much time for reading in the daytime, my—my dear,’ replied her uncle. ‘I seldom get home before six o’clock, sometimes later; except on Saturday afternoons, and then I generally take a ride.’

‘Oh, you ride? Are you fond of horses? Have you riding horses?’ but here the young lady checked herself; she was conscious of an eagerness that betrayed what was passing within her bosom, and was not quite certain whether or not such betrayal were wise. Her other uncle, hers and Bell’s mentor hitherto, had never failed to warn their youthful indiscretions against hasty exposure of the real feeling of the moment.

But it appeared that the new uncle saw nothing amiss.

‘You and your sister shall have horses of your own,’ he said simply; ‘you shall choose them for yourselves; and if you will allow me to escort you on horseback upon Saturdays, it will be a pleasant change from the lonely afternoon rides I have had till now!’

‘How kind you are!’ Even the quieter Bell burst forth into sudden animation, for the pair were noted horsewomen, and their horses had not always hitherto been such as did them justice.

Colonel Lavenham had chosen to let his charges be seen in the Row, and to take them thither himself on most days, but he had mounted them shabbily, grudging the price of good hacks, and aware that, although fine horsemanship could not be displayed on sorry beasts, fine figures and graceful carriage could be as well exhibited on the back of a screw as on that of a thoroughbred. He had expected Isabel and Monica to amble slowly up and down—even occasionally to keep to a walk during the whole time they were out; while at times he would stand and stand by the railings, talking to one friend after another, making an excuse for keeping stationary, till he often had Bell at peevishness and Monica at indignation point.

It was only when the sisters had been visiting at other houses, houses where there were good studs and accommodating hosts, that they had known the real joys of horsemanship, and that their own skill had been rated as it had deserved. Colonel Lavenham, in discoursing upon the advantages of Flodden Hall as a residence, would infallibly have included its stables and their occupants in his *résumé* had he entertained the idea for a moment that Mr. Schofield would keep riding horses. About carriages he had had little doubt; but a vague, though of course erroneous,

impression that mercantile men were never either hunting men nor riding men had kept him quiet on the other head ; since he had judged, and rightly, that if his nieces had been once fired with an idea which was destined to be baulked at the outset, it would set them against all the rest. N.B.—The reader will here please to take note that we are writing of twenty years ago, when much less was known in the fashionable world of the mercantile world than is now the case. Colonel Lavenham's ignorance may therefore be pardoned.

He knew what it meant when Monica was 'set against' anything, and he wished the Schofield scheme to have a fair start.

The present surprise was therefore all the more agreeable. Bell, who had hung languidly back hitherto, now pressed forward ; while the half-ironical attention of her sister was exchanged for genuine and very lively interest. In a trice both showed that they knew what they were talking about. Mr. Schofield, who was not learned in stable lore, but who liked to have everything about him good of its kind, was secretly astonished, and a little taken aback, at finding himself interrogated briskly on points as to which he knew very nearly nothing, and being in turn made the recipient of information he had so far only received from his coachman or his grooms.

One thing was clear, however : his fair guests were mightily pleased ; there was no mistaking the increased flow of language and alertness of movement which testified to his having made a point with them ; and a visit to the stables, and inspection of the occupants already in possession, obviously deepened the good impression made.

'I noticed what a beautiful pair brought us up from the station, Uncle Schofield,' observed Monica joyously. 'They did not seem as if they had over much work to do either, for they flew along, and in at the gate, before Bell and I had time to rub our eyes, and wonder where we were. Did the same horses go again for you ?'

'I walked up. If I drive, I generally have the dog-cart. But I walk most days,' continued Mr. Schofield, feeling every minute more and more at his ease. 'The carriage will be for you and your sister. As soon as I knew you were coming, I ordered the one in which you drove up. If there is anything wrong about it you must let me know ; but I went to our best coach-builder,' naming a well-known firm, 'and he assured me that this was a ladies' carriage.'

'It is the most perfect carriage. Why, Uncle Schofield, how wonderfully kind you are to us!' And Monica Lavenham experienced again a little twinge at her heart as she spoke. She had, it is true, observed to her sister as the two bowled along that, taken all together, horses and equipage formed a fair turn-out; but all satisfaction on that head had been swallowed up in the wrath which had followed, consequent on the discovery that the fair turn-out belonged to 'a mere villa.' She was now a very little ashamed of herself.

Isabel, however, for once came to the rescue. The prospect of having a riding horse of her own, a really pretty, smart horse, one which should carry suitably her really pretty, smart person, had sent an unwonted glow of exhilaration through Bell's veins. She now took up the thread of conversation.

'Have you any grass lanes about, Uncle Schofield?'

'Second to none in that respect, my dear. The grass paths of Lancashire and Cheshire are not to be equalled all over England. The whole of either county is intersected by them, and you could ride for weeks and weeks and never need to take the same route; nor to come back the way you set out.'

'Delightful. Do you hunt?'

'I do not. I am not a good enough horseman; besides which, I have not the time,' said Mr. Schofield in his quiet, truthful voice. Then he paused, and continued in somewhat hesitating accents, 'Unless you and your sister particularly wish to ride to hounds, I should prefer—but of course you are your own mistresses,—'

'But we should never think of doing anything to vex you,' said Monica promptly. 'And——'

'And we can't hunt, and don't like it,' added Bell.

'Even if we could,' rejoined her sister with an internal frown, 'we should give it up, if Uncle Schofield wished it, Bell; and as it is, I think your grass paths and shady lanes are all that either of us could desire.'

'How soon are you likely to hear of horses for us?' was Isabel's next, breathed in the soft, cooing tones which covered many an impertinence. 'The weather is so very fine just now.'

'Oh, I can see about them directly, my dear!' replied her uncle, to whom it occurred no more than to the speaker that it would have been in better taste to have let such a question alone. 'I shall be only too glad to see about them to-morrow. How shall we arrange it? Will you have one or two out here for

you yourselves to inspect? Or will you come in to town with me?’

‘Town?’ murmured Isabel, with open eyes. For her there was but one ‘Town.’

‘I go in rather early,’ proceeded Mr. Schofield, mistaking her surprise; ‘but if you should prefer waiting for a later train, Rushton—that’s my man—could put you in, and I would meet you at the other end. It is only a matter of three-quarters of an hour; it might be less, but only slow trains stop at this station; but, perhaps, as you are just off a long journey, you would rather rest yourselves for a few days, and go up at the end of the week?’

This, however, was not to be thought of. They made light of the journey, the fatigue, and the need for repose, in a single breath; were so obviously eager and sparkling about the proposed expedition, and so ready to agree to everything—except postponement or abandonment—that the plan was shaped and fixed before Mr. Schofield recollected that a strong and important argument on the other hand had escaped his memory when he proposed it.

‘Dear me, I had forgotten that,’ he murmured half aloud.

‘Anything particular?’ inquired Monica Lavenham, gaily. ‘Bell and I will hardly forgive you now, Uncle Schofield, if you have got any tiresome, troublesome business, which is to keep you from carrying out this delightful expedition.’

‘Oh, it is none of *my* business, my dear.’

‘Ha! ha! ha! You should have said “none of *your* business, my dear,”’ laughed the lady merrily; ‘but seriously, is there anything——?’ and she paused.

‘It is my cousin, Mrs. George Schofield,’ he said; and all three suddenly looked at each other.

‘Oh, Mrs. George Schofield,’ said Monica, prudently omitting any sort of expression from her tone. ‘I have heard of her, and of our other cousins—there are cousins, are there not? But I did not know they lived in this neighbourhood. Where do they live exactly?’

This was perhaps as near the truth as could be expected from a pupil of Colonel Lavenham’s, who had been warned many times over on the subject of the ‘Widow Schofield and her brood,’ and who was in reality much better informed on the subject, owing to his investigations, than she now pretended to be.

‘Not very far off. Some four or five miles, so they are hardly *in the neighbourhood*,’ replied her uncle. ‘In a thickly populated county like this, a mile makes all the difference in the world. I

dare say there are twenty or thirty houses nearer than Mrs. George Schofield's.'

'Good gracious!' It was Isabel from whom the exclamation proceeded. Monica's lips parted, but she uttered no sound.

'Yes, indeed,' continued Mr. Schofield, more cheerfully, 'you will not want for society. See here, follow my finger, there are one, two, three, four, five—we can see the roofs of five houses from this little rising; and that is nothing, absolutely nothing, to the numbers that are hidden away. Fine places, too. Mr. David McWhinnock has just built himself a perfect palace; and Mr. Robert Mackinlay another, very little behind it. Scotchmen both of them; the half of us are Scotchmen in this neighbourhood. And there's a very pretty spot close to my own lodge gates—you would see it as you turned in, for the gates face ours—that belongs to a nice young couple who have only been married a twelvemonth; and beyond them there is a fine, red sandstone building—the same sandstone as this—that is the property of an old maiden lady, whom I have known ever since I was a boy; oh, and there are dozens of others; but you will get to know them all in time—all in time.'

'But about Mrs. George Schofield, uncle?' It was Monica this time.

'Yes, my dear, yes; what did you want to know about Mrs. George Schofield?'

'I want to know what she is like, and why you appeared to recollect her with something of a start just now,' said Monica boldly. 'That is, of course, if you do not mind telling us,' she added, good breeding tripping up the heels of curiosity.

'Not at all—not at all,' replied Mr. Schofield. 'Oh, no, it was only that, having said she would call upon you and your sister to-morrow, she might consider that you ought to stop at home for her.'

'Of course, my dear uncle, if *you* wish us to do so,——' Monica paused.

'You do not think it necessary, eh?'

'If you ask me, no; not in the very least; not in the very slightest,' replied Miss Lavenham, colour and emphasis alike rising. 'Oh, dear me, no! It is never done. Mrs. George Schofield would never expect it. She should not have said she was coming; it was a mistake on her part. Nobody ought to say they are coming, unless they are asked to come; nobody ever does say it, Uncle Schofield?' Another pause, decidedly suggestive.

Uncle Schofield's eyes were twinkling.

'Well, my dear?'

'Just fancy what a dreadful thing it would be if one had to stay in the house every time that an acquaintance chose to say it was her intention to call! Would it not be perfect tyranny?'

'My dear,' replied her uncle, prudently waiving the question, 'you know about such matters better than I do, or,' his eyes twinkled again, 'better than Mrs. George Schofield does, I suspect. You will do what is proper, I am sure. Mrs. George Schofield is a relation——'

'A cousin, is she not?'

'Her husband was your mother's first cousin.'

'We don't think much of that now-a-days,' said Monica lightly. 'We have no nearer relations, have we?'

'None—except myself.'

'I am glad of that,' observed a soft voice on his other side. 'We don't particularly care about being too much related, Uncle Schofield.'

A quick glance from Monica. Internally she was wondering, 'Now has that poor thing put her foot in it or not?'

Apparently not. Mr. Schofield was regarding the 'poor thing' quite benignly, almost appreciatively, as if both ready and willing to second the sentiment.

'Just so, my dear. One can have too many relations,' he said. But '—as with an internal amendment on the part of conscience, —'Mrs. George Schofield is an excellent woman: I have not a word to say against Mrs. George Schofield. And to be sure Daisy is a pretty creature.'

'Daisy must be the daughter?'

'Oh, there are more daughters than one, though Daisy is the eldest. There are Minnie, and Lottie, and Tottie, besides. But Daisy is your own age, and she is a nice girl enough.'

'Are there any sons?'

'Oh, there are sons. There is George; he is a fine young man, in the business now. His father died, you may remember, a few years ago——'

'Yes?'

Monica could always say 'Yes' appropriately.

'When he died it was understood that George should have the partnership.'

'Then I suppose he goes in and out with you every day?'

'Well, no—no; hardly that. It would not do for the young men to take it quite so easy as we elder ones do. George goes in an hour

earlier, and comes out an hour or so later—not that he is at home so very much later, however; for there are quick trains out to his station, and we have none but slow ones down here, this being a quiet little spot, as you see—but he is later in starting. The other boys are still at school,’ continued Mr. Schofield. ‘There are two or three of them; and the mother is, as I say, an excellent woman, and does her duty by them all. But if you do not choose to see very much of her, or of them, why, you needn’t, that’s all. Their place is about five miles off, and they are not often my way. If you do not think it necessary to stop at home for Mrs. George Schofield’s call, why, please yourselves. You can see her in her own house any day you care to drive over. There is the gong, young ladies, and that means half-an-hour till dinner-time;’ and he turned towards the house.

‘We dine at seven then, I suppose,’ said Monica, pleasantly. No one would have supposed from her tone that she had ever dined at any other hour.

CHAPTER III.

‘TO THINK OF US HERE!’

When first in life’s young spring,
Like the gay bee-bird on delighted wing,
She’d stooped to cull the honey from each flower
That bares its breast in joy’s luxuriant hour.—WATTS.

DINNER passed agreeably enough; and as soon as it was over our youthful beauties retired to the drawing-room, leaving their uncle to his wine and his reflections.

Monica threw herself back in a broad arm-chair, and laughed aloud. Isabel more soberly smiled, as she sank down upon a couch, arranged a cushion for a support, and put her hand to her brow. ‘It is funny,’ she said, however.

‘Funny! It is the most extraordinary, incredible, inconceivable, outrageous, anomalous state of things imaginable. To think of us, here! *Us*, here! *Us*, *here*!’ varying the emphasis with each repetition. ‘To think of you and me in this house! Accepted, adopted, posted up in all details, presented with the freedom of the estate, with riding-horses of our own,—’

—‘Ah!’ ejaculated Bell.

‘That fetched you, I could see. Oh yes, and I glowed and

gushed also. But, seriously, there is something in the whole position so irresistibly comic, so absolutely incongruous, that I am half inclined to believe we are the victims of a first-rate practical jest, and that we shall wake up at any moment, to laugh at ourselves for being so taken in by it.'

'I suppose we ought really to consider that we are very well off,' observed Bell, sententiously. 'You know Uncle Lavenham said so. If he approved of our coming, and thought it a good thing for us, it must be all right.'

'I am not quite so sure about that.'

'What do you mean? He would never have allowed us to come to any low place——'

'Oh, "low place," no! And who called this a "low place"? But I will tell you one of my discoveries, Bell—which is that Uncle Schofield knows just about as much of Uncle Lavenham's way of life as Uncle Lavenham does of Uncle Schofield's. See that?'

'You mean that Uncle Lavenham did not know what we were coming to?'

'He did not know, and he did not care.'

'Oh, Monica!'

'You never supposed he did care?'

'I am very fond of Uncle Lavenham,' murmured Bell, plaintively. 'It seemed a great pity that he should have to go abroad as well as Aunt Fanny. We could have stayed on very well with him in Lowndes Square till the season was over; and then have joined her, wherever she was at the time. We——'

'He did not want us,' said Monica, bluntly.

'I dare say it was very natural,' proceeded she, after a pause. 'I believe in his being ill, because I have noticed that several times of late he has refused invitations which he would really have liked to accept. He did not go to that dinner to the Duke of Cambridge, and he has not been once in his old place on Lord Harbery's drag; wherefore I am a believer in Uncle Lavenham from ocular demonstration—the only demonstration that would have made me one; and, that being the case, I forgive him. But I will tell you now, my dear sister, what I did not dare confide to you before, in case you might in a guileless moment let slip a suspicion of it: Uncle Lavenham was simply determined to be rid of us.'

Her sister's cheek flushed.

'It *was* a shame,' continued Monica, coolly; 'but I have got
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over it, and luckily you did not perceive it for yourself. I knew it would vex you, poor dear,'—in a softened tone,—‘and I saw no need for vexing you. I only tell you now, because—well, because it may make you happier in this new home than you might otherwise have been.’

‘Oh, I dare say I shall be happy enough!’ said Bell, disconsolately.

‘It is at any rate better than knocking about the world without any home at all,’ suggested her sister, with the shrewdness born of an early sense of dependence. ‘I have always felt that Uncle Lavenham and Aunt Fanny meant us to consider Lowndes Square only as a sort of *pied-à-terre* till something else turned up. Till we married, I suppose, is the plain English of it; and it was assumed, moreover, that we were to be pretty quick about that.’

Isabel sat still and made no rejoinder.

‘You do not see the oddity of it as I do?’ proceeded the speaker.

‘It is very odd.’

‘But you see how kind this new uncle is. And he is not disagreeable, and not familiar. He has really a nice manner. I think we shall be able to manage him very well.’

‘The horses, Monica. I never expected to have horses of our own. Uncle Lavenham never gave us horses—except hired ones.’

‘Uncle Lavenham never gave us a good many things that I foresee we shall have from Uncle Schofield. This grand piano, for instance. Its tone is perfect; and Aunt Fanny’s had grown so old, and was so badly looked after, that it was always out of tune. It will be something to have such a piano to sing to again. Then, though this room is dreadful, the dining-room is not half bad, and the dinner was exceedingly good. What fruit there was for dessert! I wonder if we shall have strawberries and peaches like those every night. And our own rooms, Bell, my dear, are very, very much handsomer than any rooms you and I ever had for our own before. Josephine is in high glee, I can see. The little wretch is as luxurious in her tastes as if she were a duchess; and she was always hinting that her bedroom in London was too small and too dark. Now she has been given a room close to ours, on the other side of yours—did you know that? Well, I shall not say anything to Uncle Schofield, of course, but I let Josephine see that I thought it rather ridiculous. She says the baths are all of marble, and that there is hot water in every corner of the house! I like that. Oh, and another thing—I

knew I had something to tell you, but you would keep her so long over your hair that I could not have it out before dinner—you should have seen the meeting between her and Uncle Schofield on the stairs. Evidently, at first sight, he was at a loss to imagine who and what such an apparition could be. He had forgotten about our maid, no doubt. So then he shuffled into a corner, and stood back for her to pass. She would not pass. So then he made a gallant bow, and stepped forward. So then she dropped a pretty curtsy, and tripped after. Then he addressed her in English. Then she replied in gibberish. This he mistook for French. This——'

The door opened, and coffee appeared.

'This is quite the newest rose of the season,' drawled Miss Monica, completing her supposed sentence, by drawing a fragrant blossom towards her.

Meantime Mr. Schofield was enjoying his glass of port to his heart's content. He had surmounted the ordeal of receiving his nieces; he had gone through the list of his possessions for their benefit; he had eaten his dinner with them; held open the door for them, and seen them depart; and he now had a clear hour before him wherein to chew the cud of all the new and pleasurable sensations gone through within the last few hours.

At all times to sit thus for a while within his pleasant, quiet dining-room at that hour was agreeable. It was to him, as to his nieces, a far preferable apartment to the duller, more pretentious bay-windowed apartment on the other side of the house; it faced the west, and the glories of sunset, and the meadows and woodlands beyond; so that altogether it was a sunny, calm abode, and never more inviting than when, as now, the genial rays played upon the bare, polished, fine old mahogany table, covered with its picturesque *débris* of fruits, flowers, and glasses.

On this particular July evening the air was balmy, while the heat of the day was over. The birds had begun to twitter and sing again in the cooler atmosphere; through the open windows came the odour of mignonette, heliotrope, and other sweet-scented blossoms; while bees and gnats hummed up and down on the panes, and a butterfly now and again drifted in, on its way past. Not a disturbing sound fell upon the ear; not a vexing sight marred the peaceful outlook.

Mr. Schofield, leisurely reposing in an arm-chair of the finest leather, stretching out his limbs over a carpet of the softest pile, and sipping slow sips of the vintage he best loved, was a very

enviable man at a very enviable moment. Hitherto his life, although, as we have said, an estimable, benevolent, and blameless one—nay, one which was deserving both of respect and imitation—had not been without its want as regarded himself. He had done all that in him lay for others; he had found reward in the happiness of many who had owed their happiness to him; and while remembering the poor, he had not been unmindful of the rich. He was not only a worthy, he was a popular personage, and was conscious of the good-will of neighbours and friends, as well as of the blessings of the humble.

But—and it was not only when the ‘but’ had been supplied that he had felt its existence—but he had been lonely. He was a man who liked cheerful, domestic home-life; an inquisitive man; a man inclined to be interested in neighbourly concerns, excited over family events; a man who would trudge over every storey of a friend’s house, and who would not be satisfied without inspecting every niche in a friend’s garden; a man who liked to be told things, and to know about things; a man who was always pleased to be invited to a festivity, and who liked nothing better than to give a festivity of his own in return—a man, in short, who ought to have been married, and never had been married, and was never now likely to marry.

If there had at any time been the slightest chance of the latter contingency, the arrangement suggested by Colonel Lavenham had given the idea its death-blow. One woman in the house might have been good, but two were infinitely better; one might have been a necessity, but two meant luxury; one might have been a trouble, but two could amuse themselves; one might have put him out of his way, but two would have a way of their own. In every way two had it.

And then, Mr. Schofield had very much amended his first verdict on his nieces’ looks by this time. He had blinked his eyes, and almost blushed—it was a trick he had—when the two had come downstairs attired in evening dress, their round, white shoulders and long, tapering arms shown to advantage by black frocks (relics of a bygone mourning, and voted the thing for home evenings at Flodden Hall)—with their beautiful hair re-arranged by Josephine’s deft fingers; with colour in their cheeks, and light in their eyes.

He had perceived that he had done injustice to their charms: that Isabel was grace itself—soft, caressing, undulating grace; while Monica—he had drawn a long breath as he surveyed

Monica. There was a brilliancy, a power, a pride about Monica, the like of which he had never beheld before. Colonel Lavenham had justly estimated the effect the young London beauty would produce when once seen and once owned by her new relation. It might suit a disappointed man in a peevish moment to term his nieces merely pretty; he knew better; merely pretty girls would never have been produced by him, and vaunted by him, as his brother's orphans had been.

'Let the old fellow once see them, and they are all right,' he had confided to his wife in the interim between despatching the letter which had acted as a 'feeler' and the reception of its rejoinder. 'Let him but cast his eyes upon Monica, and she will make way for them both.'

Nevertheless, it was not, as we have said, until the young ladies had descended, refreshed and re-habilitated, that the desired impression had been fully accomplished.

'Upon my word, I did them but scant justice before,' Mr. Schofield had reflected. 'I did not take into account dust, and weariness, and heat—and perhaps a little feeling about coming to a new home, and meeting a new relation. I was a little let down, and that was the truth. I thought Londoners must have a different standard of looks from what we North-country folks have. Pale faces and puling figures might suit them, I fancied. But that colonel of theirs knew what he was talking about,—a leisurely sip of the ruby liquid,—'that he did,'—setting down the glass. 'Two finer creatures—but Monica is the one! There's a beauty for you! An eye like a wild deer. And she looks—looks—looks,—I wonder,' suddenly, 'what she finds to look at? There is nothing in me to look at. She is taking in everything, though, that girl is. She is no fool. No, nor is the other either; though she is a quieter lassie. I fancy Monica takes the lead.' Then his thoughts fell into another groove. 'They will look a bonny pair on horseback, I'll warrant 'em. I must get them a couple of bays, as good a match as possible, and we'll show the folks about how to do the thing. I had no notion they would ride. Town-bred misses, I thought, would care for nothing but sitting up in an open carriage, or trundling along in a pony-cart. A pony-cart, eh? There's another thing I had forgotten. They will want a pony-cart, or some such little light article, to run about the lanes in. Let me see; there's the single brougham, and the double brougham, and the dogcart, and the barouche, and—and that's all. They are few enough for young ladies of position. If

they fancy a pony-cart, a pony-cart they shall have. Hey, Mrs. George Schofield, I wonder what you will say to it all? I should like to see your face when you come to hear of these doings. Lord! she will think I have gone mad. I shall have some one to pit against her and her George, and all the rest of 'em, now. If Colonel Lavenham's nieces can't hold their own with Daisy Schofield, give me leave never to have another opinion on the subject, that's all.'

It is now time that the Mrs. George Schofield, once before alluded to in these pages, should be presented in due form and at due length to our readers. Mrs. Schofield—she always made a point of being Mrs. Schofield, cousin Joseph being unmarried, as she would explain—Mrs. Schofield, then, was by no means a bad sort of woman. Her husband had loved her, her children did love her, her household respected her, her parish benefited by her, and no one could say a syllable against her. But one stubborn fact stood out in bold relief on the other side—it was indisputable that everybody, from the highest to the lowest, from the oldest to the youngest, had a trick of getting out of Mrs. Schofield's way.

If the rector, for example, were about to take the field-path towards the village, and caught a glimpse of a certain blue cotton parasol in the field beyond, Mr. Fairleigh would promptly twitch himself round, and hurry up the high road, dust and all, as fast as he could go. To all appearance the worthy pastor had suddenly recollected a parochial visit to be made in that direction; but somehow, such a recollection was one with which he might never have been smitten had not the above-named blue parasol loomed on the opposite horizon.

If the cards of Mrs. and the Misses Schofield were found upon a neighbour's hall-table on the neighbour's return from an afternoon drive or walk, the neighbour would not, as a rule, express regret. Mrs. Schofield's own children would look at each other, and murmur excuses if their mother desired a companion; the servants would fidget and shuffle if caught and detained; and as for her cousin Joseph—but we shall know more of Mr. Joseph Schofield's sentiments presently.

Now what had this good woman—for she was a good woman, and no one gainsayed it—what had she done to be so treated, so avoided? Out with the worst: Mrs. Schofield was a bore. There are many kinds of bores. Dissertations by the ream might be written, and have been written, anent boredom in all its variations; but there is perhaps one kind of bore which, so far, has scarcely

been done full justice to. It is the bore who challenges your respect, who disarms your satire, who silences your sneer; the bore whom for very shame you cannot snub, whom for very truth's sake you cannot slander; the bore whom in your heart of hearts you designate excellent, admirable, irreproachable; the bore whom to call a bore would be blasphemy.

Such a bore, in nine cases out of ten, is the bore paternal or maternal. You cannot, in your calmer moments, think slightly of him or her, aware as you are of the many sacrifices made, the endless trouble taken, the cares and pains bestowed, the money spent upon those children, in whom is wrapped up every fibre of the heart's affection. You cannot pooh-pooh the man or woman who toils and strains—aye, and fights and fends, day and night, year after year, for the helpless brood, with their ever-increasing demands and necessities. You would not grudge your approbation of the parent whose daily life is thus given out to others; who has scarce a personality of his or her own; who is, as it were, a lost identity, swallowed up in his or her offspring. That is just what you cannot do; and it is, therefore, on that precise account that this species of bore becomes a bore intolerable, a bore which cannot be borne—no pun, dear reader—a bore for whom the only cure, and the sole remedy, is—flight.

We now see why Mrs. Schofield so often found her path cleared.

'I had an hour of Mrs. Schofield, that dear, good woman, to-day;' it is the parson who is speaking, and he groans as he speaks. 'She caught me just at my busiest—of course, one ought not to grudge one's time to a parishioner, and such an excellent creature, too, but,' another groan, 'I did wish I had managed to get out before she came. Hearing a voice in the porch, I took it into my head that it was Mrs. Fitch, or Mrs. Thomson, with the collecting-books, and I thought I might as well shake hands, and could then run off. If I had known it was Mrs. Schofield! First I had to hear all about George—George is her great topic at the present moment; then about Robert, then Herbert, then Walter. Next began the girls—Daisy, Minnie, Lottie, Tottie—every one of the four; and if I had not actually *had* to go just as we reached Tottie, we should have begun with George again, and started on a second round. George is an excellent fellow. I have a great regard for George, as I have let the good creature know repeatedly. I have told her, over and over again, that I am sure she has a son who is treading in his good father's steps, and who

must be a comfort and a credit to them all. But one really cannot go on sympathising and congratulating for ever.'

Now this was just what Mrs. Schofield wished every person she met with to do. Introduced to a perfect stranger, five minutes would not have elapsed before the extraordinary talents and achievements, the remarkable inclinations and idiosyncrasies of some one or other of her many young people, were being vaunted, having been insinuated somehow or other into the conversation, from which, once admitted, there was no chance of their ejection. George was his mother's darling; but if—unaware of the nature of the ground—heedless ignorance or slavish good-nature encouraged George as a theme, such folly brought its own punishment. George only gave place to Robert, Robert to Herbert, and so on, as every friend, relation, or acquaintance of the amiable prattler, now knew to their cost.

It may be said that, after all, there was a species of egotism underlying this. Perhaps there was. Joseph Schofield thought there was; and he was a fairly shrewd diviner of the passions of the human breast;—but nevertheless, it was, as we have said before, an egotism which the world can forgive so long as the world can slip aside, and let the torrent pass.

As long as I am not obliged to hearken to your recital of the honours which have crowned the head of your firstborn, my dear lady, I have no objection that you should take a mother's pride in them, and boast of them in other quarters. Go and buttonhole the good rector, if you will. Prate in old Mr. Dumby's deaf ear for as long as you like. Exhaust the poor invalid who cannot get away from you, if your conscience is clear to do so—but let me off. Then will I call you the best of parents, a paragon of maternal virtue.

It was only the unlucky ones who had been recently under the torture, and who had escaped maimed and bruised, who would now and again rise up against their tormentor for the nonce. A hundred to one they would be sorry afterwards, repent, and recapitulate the excellences which had been obliterated under the teeth of the harrow. Nay, in the pangs of their remorse, they would take themselves to task for inhumanity; and thus, in the long run, the worthy, the admirable, the amiable Mrs. Schofield would score by her very crime.

But imagine such a personage brought face to face with Monica Lavenham.

This was how the meeting came about: a heavy thunder-

storm had prevented the expedition which had been planned by the girls and their uncle, and necessitated the former's remaining at home for the greater part of the following afternoon. They had forgotten all about their threatened visitor, having received letters and notes which had stirred up another train of ideas, some of which, indeed, had demanded consideration. They had given up the day's project directly its abandonment had been seen to be inevitable, with the equanimity of young people who had not been spoilt in that respect—in truth, the two had had to give up their own way tolerably often in the Lavenham household of late—and had permitted Rushton to send a telegram, while settling down to writing and music, until the lightning had become too vivid, and the thunder too appalling.

As the storm died away, however, cheerfulness had been resumed, and Monica was in the act of saying, 'I think we might go off for a walk; the sun is peeping out, and the rain is nearly over,' when the words died away on her lips, and she drew back from the window hastily. A carriage had turned in at the gate. 'I believe it is Mrs. George Schofield,' she cried.

(To be continued)

At the Sign of the Ship.

THE announcements of new books, in early October, are always pleasant reading, especially, perhaps, when the new books are really old ones revived. This year many of our old friends are to come with new faces; first and best the Saga Library, of Mr. William Morris and Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon, which Mr. Quaritch is going to publish. A critic has remarked, in private, that 'the Philistine shudders at the very name of a Saga.' Mr. Quaritch appears to reckon that at least a thousand people have not bent the knee to Dagon, for he proposes an edition of 1,000 copies, at five shillings a volume. Let us hope that at least one thousand persons, provided with the necessary crown pieces, have that craze for the Sagas which is its own reward. Books written by white savages, for white savages, or barbarians at least, are the Sagas, the most delightful reading, full of adventure, ghosts, the best of fights, laws, manners, customs, and histories, all told with vigour and simplicity. Perhaps the reason why many people find the Sagas tedious is, that they are so full of genealogy and family history. They almost remind one of Mark Twain's tale of the Old Ram, in which the narrator, giving a Saga-like profusion of detail about every one even remotely connected with the Old Ram, never comes to the Old Ram at all. But the Sagas do come to him, to Gunnar, or Grettir, or Egil, though seldom by the shortest route. There are already, in one shape or another, and especially in a rare old copy by Sir George Dasent, versions of the mythical Sagas, the Prose and the Verse Edda, which deal with the legendary beginning of things. Mr. Morris has already given us, also, the Epic, the Volsunga Saga, the true early shape of the Nibelungenlied, with its extraordinary mixture of the wildest imagery and the most modern passion of love. The Heimskringla, or Saga of the Norway Kings, may be had, in a very expensive shape, in Mr. Laing's 'Chronicle of the Kings of Norway.' But it is less easy to lay hands on an English version of the Saga of Eric the Red, who discovered America in the tenth

century. A noble boy's book might be made out of the adventures of Vikings among Red Men and Aztecs, not, of course, that the Norsemen ever reached them; but why should they not do so in fiction, and fight the mythic Naked Bear of American native fable? Egil's Saga, I think, one cannot at present obtain at all, and the Saga of the Laxdale men I only possess in Latin. These and the rest are truly Epic narratives, the Odysseys of a ruder race than the Achæans. Njal's Saga, the best of all, is becoming scarce and expensive in Sir George Dasent's edition, and there be other Sagas which are quite strangers to people ignorant of Icelandic. The translators truly say that no old literature is 'so amusing' as those narratives, and few so free from coarseness. The Sagas 'are the best tale-telling which the world has yet seen,' says Mr. Morris, though we may perhaps except the Greek Epics, and even the Arabian Nights, as Galland told them. A good part of the tales, too, is manifestly true, with only such supernatural additions and romance as imagination was sure to add, in the course of a few centuries. Therefore we may welcome these noble romances, as among the best books for men, and even still more for boys, though the remoteness of the age in which they were told, and the strangeness of the atmosphere, may frighten away the readers of three-volume novels.

* * *

Another old book which is new is the *Locked Book*, or *Diary of Sir Walter Scott*, from 1825 to 1832, which Mr. Douglas, of Edinburgh, is publishing, with the aid of Mrs. Maxwell Scott. Lockhart used, in his *Biography*, all that he thought expedient, and showed us that noble fight of Sir Walter's to end his life with honour. Mr. Carlyle apparently had not read the last volume of the *Biography* when he wrote his celebrated essay. Had he read it, surely he must have written with more sympathy. Anecdotes and letters which Lockhart could not give are given now, and the unfinished journal of Sir Walter's tour to Naples. It is a melancholy and interesting study, so vigorous and active, and eager, as of old, is the Minstrel's genius, and again so sadly clouded and confused by the shadow of the end, which had already begun. To people who have not read Lockhart—a considerable majority—this is wholly a new book; even to students familiar with Lockhart, it holds much that is new, and likely to make the author even dearer to his posthumous friends. Then, once more, Mr. Jacobs is publishing, with Mr. Nutt, the first

fairly complete collection of real English nursery tales, faint fragments, for the English were the first people to forget their own popular traditions. And Messrs. Bell are bringing out Mr. Robert Bridges's *Lyrics*, which have been as hard to find as Shakespeare quartos, almost, for some years; while Howell's *Letters (Epistolæ Ho-Eliañæ)*, the most diverting gossip, a favourite 'bedside book' of Thackeray's, is being issued by Mr. Stott, and, in Bohn's Library, we are to have Jessopp's edition of *Lives of the Norths*. Thus the wise persons who, when a new book is praised, re-read an old one, will have plenty of the best old books to re-read, and will vex Mr. Grant Allen by saying that 'the old is better.' In this competition with the Dead, the modern author suffers little, for few are they who do not say, as people said in Homer's time, that the best lays are the newest.

* * *

It is an unlucky thing for a people to have a national game, and then to get beaten at that game by aliens. This appears to be the condition of my countrymen with regard to Golf. In the Amateur Championship meeting, at Hoylake, four men were left in at the end, three Scotch and one English. The English representative, Mr. John Ball, was the winner. Again, at the St. Andrews meeting in September, when Mr. Ball was absent, it was an Englishman, Mr. Horace Hutchinson, who gained the first medal. We must console ourselves by reflecting that these are but amateur contests, that no English professional is at all likely to beat Park or Kirkcaldy. The St. Andrews medal is seldom won by a very distinguished score. Mr. Hutchinson's 85 was very fair for a medal day, when the more famous players are begirt by a crowd of lookers-on. It is probable that he and others have often done the round in a much smaller number of strokes when there was no crowd and no anxiety, just as the University eleven usually play better anywhere but at Lord's.

* * *

Concerning Genius and Talent, and the advantages of the latter despised quality, a correspondent, Mr. Jones, who has no genius, sends some remarks. He says that he cannot imitate the costume of genius, and does not envy the gloom, the conceit, the despair, the dyspepsia, and the too ramified love affairs, which, as he is disposed to think, are among the drawbacks of self-acknowledged genius. He adds that he likes the good-natured contempt and

patronage with which his critics can afford to treat him, as a mere person of talent, much better than some of the portions which fall to genius. Nobody envies *him*; nobody lies much about him, even in the evening papers; his name is not a kind of battlefield, over which his admirers and his enemies worry each other. A reviewer can begin to write about a volume by another person without first pausing to assault him, his works, and all that is his. Nor is he pestered by endless requests for his autograph and a lock of his hair. Genius is less fortunate. It excites wild passions of love and hatred; it is larded with praise, and then burned, like a live torch, at the figurative stake. Of course, if works of genius always yielded a handsome income, Mr. Jones admits that he could regard the sorrows of genius with complete indifference. But every one knows that this is not invariably the case. Sometimes genius is only recognised by critics who are eternally writing about 'style,' and proving, by their own affected and uneducated verbiage, that they are entirely ignorant of their favourite topic. For all these reasons, Mr. Jones expresses himself as equally charmed with the works of Genius, when he meets it, and resigned, in his own humble person, to do without it. But he does not understand why he should therefore be regarded as a kind of literary or artistic leper because he does his work pretty fairly, turns out an article for which there is a moderate demand, is contented with his wages, and never dreams of being remembered for a day after he has ceased to labour. He remarks that *Genius* is constantly breaking its head against the problems of the universe. Now, it requires very little *talent*, he says, to see that there is nothing to be made out of *them*. He is profane enough to declare that the observations which Genius produces on Life, Death, Love, Destiny, and so forth, are all of them obvious, at a glance, to any reflective mind, that they have no merit, except, of course, in their style and manner, and that he is content to turn away from such bottomless topics. He is inclined to hold that the difference between genius and talent is very much a difference of degree, and that a man may at one moment of his life be possessed of genius, and have only talent at another moment, and not very much of that. In short, Mr. Jones regards himself, and people like him, as members, intellectually speaking, of the middle class. He says that this middle class would be missed if it disappeared, and left an unbridged gulf between genius, on the one side, and persons who frothily declaim about genius on the other. He will even maintain that, whatever vast

advantages genius may have over talent, at all events talent is, as a rule, more punctual. 'Talent does what it can, genius does what it *must*,' the proverb says. Jones avers that this is an error. Genius does what it can, talent does what it must; 'for example,' says Jones, ruefully, 'I *must* now go off and write an article on wooden paving for the streets, which I know nothing about. Would a man of genius do this? Depend upon it, if the newspapers and magazines were left entirely to men of genius, they very often would not come out at all.' He adds, that if there were no men of talent, men of genius would have nobody to appreciate them properly, and point out their merits in a pleasing and attractive manner. Perhaps, however, nobody is denying these contentions of Jones's, who, after all, may be a little hurt at his own failure to reach the glittering heights which he professes that he is well content not to scale.

* * *

Count Tolstoi and other philosophers have decided that Love plays too great a part in fiction as well as in life. Probably they will be yet more of their own opinion after studying most recent French novels, especially M. Guy de Maupassant's *Notre Cœur*. This tells of the loves of a gentleman who had no occupation except his passion, and of a widow lady who was a kind of fascinating Mrs. Leo Hunter. They never dreamed of marrying, though there was nothing to prevent them, and the lover was profoundly miserable because the lady was not entirely absorbed in him, but continued to hunt lions, to dress sumptuously, and to glitter in society. So he retired as far as Fontainebleau, the prey of utter melancholy, and there a beautiful and accomplished *dame de comptoir* fell as much in love with him as he was with the widow. There is literally no incident except the minute accidents of these affections, and there is almost less than no conclusion. This kind of writing is hardly possible in an English novel, where you either marry or die, and, in either case, probably find some interest, in this world or the next, outside of the affairs of the heart. Indeed, that is an indefensible human existence which entirely consists of one passion, with various objects, perhaps. It is wearisome to read about, and, apparently, tedious and excruciating to live. In an age when Marriage is promptly declared to be a Failure, let us remember that at least it does end a love affair, and prevents us from declining into the despair of M. de Mariolles, the hero of this ingenious and woeful fiction.

He tried to find distraction in fishing for gudgeons. A salmon river in Norway, a fish at the end of his line, would have been a certain and manly cure. But he neither married nor took a salmon river (which he could easily have afforded), and the story leaves him between the two ladies, in a most deplorable deadlock. Man was not meant to do nothing whatever but make love.

* *

Painters and other artists grumble occasionally at the severities of art critics who are not performers. But have they ever noticed the amenities which a distinguished artist, Mr. Dante Rossetti, scattered among his brethren when *he* played the critic? Here be a few. 'Platitudes,' 'pretentious mediocrities,' 'abortive mammoths,' 'mawkish, ill-drawn, ill-coloured,' 'supremely uninteresting,' 'a contemptible and vexatious piece of affectation,' 'Watts's dirty Titianism,' 'proves the one thing most difficult of proof, that the painter is not a fool,' 'only not worse than possible . . . a boundary almost annihilated by Mr. Eddis.' And so forth. A sporting prophet in a cheap and offensive print could hardly rail more violently. If this, which may be read in Mr. Rossetti's collected works, is a specimen of an artist's criticism, let us be glad that other critics are not artists. The criticisms, to be sure, were done in early days, when the author was very young; still, they do not look as if a painter's review of other painters were likely to fail in producing a breach of the peace.

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The name of Poet is not one to scatter about freely, in an age of extremely skilled versifiers. But to the late Lord Rosslyn the name might perhaps be applied, thanks to the perfect sincerity and simplicity of his verse, in which a frank and kindly nature and an excellent heart always found expression that was often adequate. He was not a subtle melodist, nor a seeker of ideas far-fetched and dear-bought, but these are merely negative merits. His positive virtues were the simple yet sufficient utterances of goodness and affection, touching by virtue of mere sterling simplicity. If he did not tickle the ear, he touched the heart; and though he was not didactic, you felt better for reading his sonnets. They were genuine, they made no false nor pretentious appeal, and in this they corresponded to the work of another modern, more popular than Lord Rosslyn, perhaps, though less popular than he deserved to be, Sir Francis Doyle.

AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

Hither and thither flying,
 Flickering to and fro,
 Swallows their wings are trying
 All in the sunset glow.
 Purposeless now, and nestless
 They are eager for flight.
 They are restless, ah! restless;
 They will start to-night.

Summer came with the swallows,
 Bringing beautiful days;
 Hawthorn foam in the hollows;
 Gorse in a golden blaze.
 Fields that were flushed with flowers;
 Skies that were blue above;
 And certain sunshiny hours
 Of Hope and Love.

Summer will go with the swallows;
 Autumn will travel here.
 Then, when the winter follows—
 The desolate end of the year—
 Skies will be dim with raining,
 Flowers will die in the cold,
 But Hope and Love remaining
 Will be ours to hold. FRANCES WYNNE.

A. LANG.

The 'Donna.'

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the receipt of the following sums. Contributions received after October 12 will be acknowledged in the December number.

Nina Bert 5s. J. D., Kensington, 5s. Clifton 2s. 6d. W. B. 10s. ('Donna').
 Bertha, a parcel of Magazines. W. B. 10s. (Workcom). East Kent, 20s. Miss
 Hinton, comforters, shawl, &c.

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The Editor requests that his correspondents will be good enough to write to him informing him of the subject of any article they wish to offer, before sending the MS. A stamped and addressed envelope should accompany the MS. if the writer wishes it to be returned in case of non-acceptance. The Editor can in no case hold himself responsible for accidental loss. All communications should be addressed to

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